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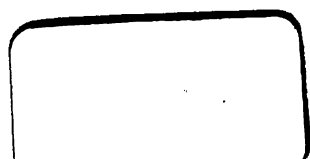
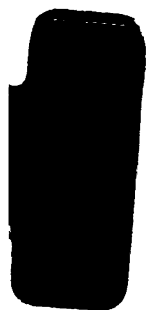
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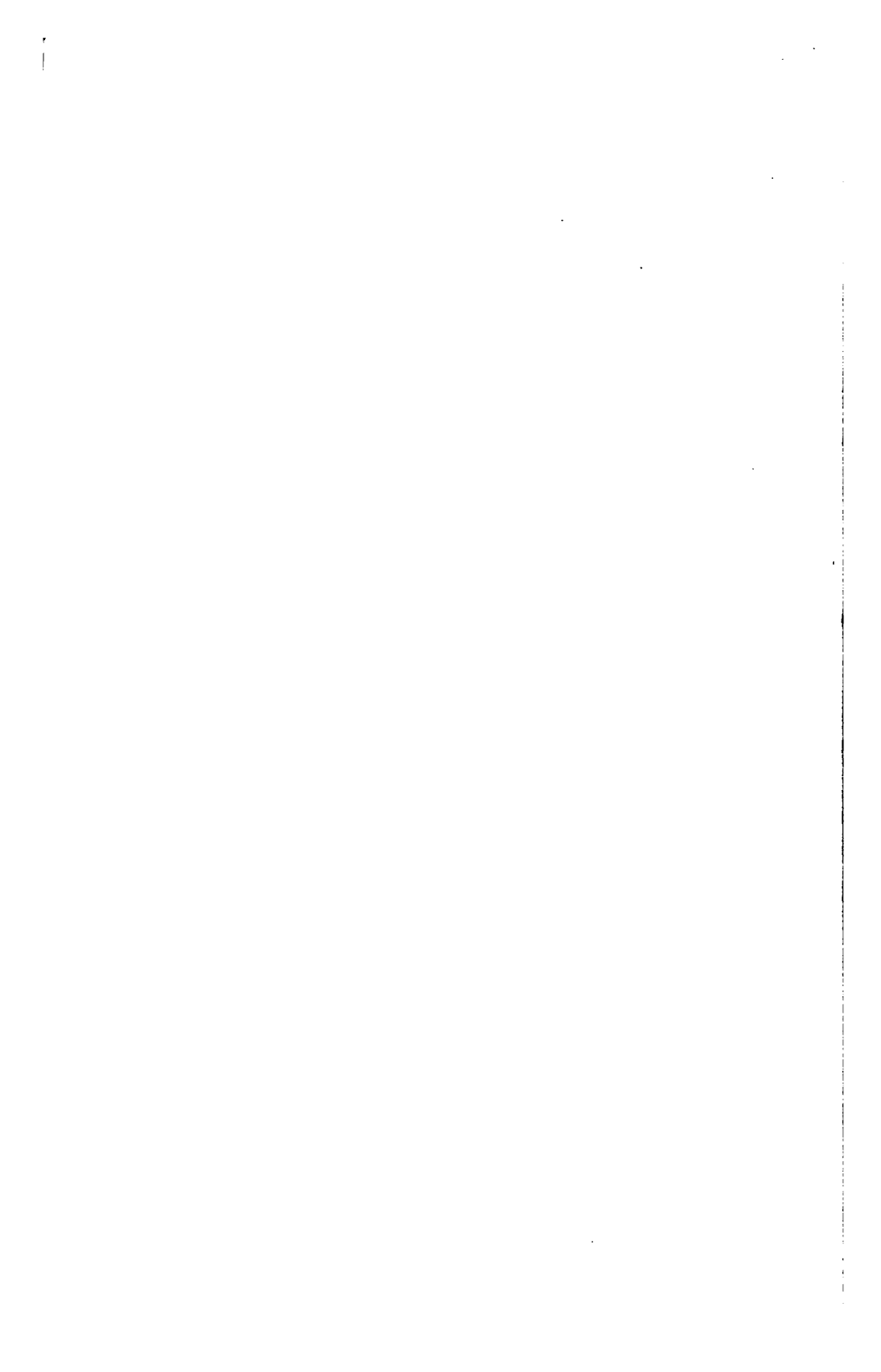
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THE  
LIFE AND TIMES  
OF  
THE REV. JESSE LEE. 1756-1814

BY  
LEROY M. LEE, D.D.

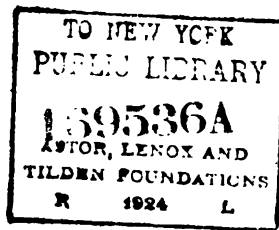
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"If thou would'st reap in love,  
First sow in holy fear:  
So life a winter's morn may prove  
To a bright endless year."—KEBLE.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him; and He shall direct thy paths."—PROVERBS

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TO  
HIS SURVIVING FRIENDS,  
AND HIS SONS AND SUCCESSORS IN THE MINISTRY  
OF METHODISM IN THE UNITED STATES,  
THE FOLLOWING NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE, ZEAL, AND DEVOTION  
OF ONE OF THE FATHERS  
OF THE AMERICAN METHODIST CHURCH,  
IS  
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

Wegelin. Nov 26. 1924.



## PREFACE.

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IN offering to public consideration the biography of one who has been long dead, the author is aware that a reason for such a proceeding may be well demanded. He has no hesitation in meeting an expectation so obviously just and proper. But in obeying such a behest, fidelity to truth involves him in a position of great delicacy, and may expose him to the suspicion of seeking to honour the dead at the expense of the living. Conscious, however, of aiming only at the truth of history, and of independence of all selfish considerations, he enters upon his task without reluctance, and will wait the issue of his facts without either anxiety or fear.

The individual, a narrative of whose life is recorded in the following pages, died in 1816, leaving, as a legacy to the Church, an example rich in Christian excellence, and replete with memorials of self-sacrifice and devotedness. In 1823, a Memoir of his Life was published by one of his contemporaries. This work was not only unsatisfying to the immediate friends and relatives of Mr. Lee, but it disappointed the just expectations of the Church. It was essentially defective as a portraiture of his character, and left a great gulf of discrepancy between his public fame as a distinguished and successful minister, and the recorded narrative of his labours. No one familiar with his reputation in the Church could find anything either to authorize or justify it in his

Memoirs. There were causes, however, that may very safely be plead in extenuation of this complaint, that, in justice to the author of the Memoir, ought to be stated. Mr. Lee left a very copious Journal of his life and ministerial labours. These were given to the Virginia Conference, and by them placed in the hands of a committee, to be prepared for publication. The committee suffered several years to pass without completing, or, it is believed, even commencing the duty devolved upon them. In the mean time the Church was demanding the work of the Conference, and the Conference was urging the committee to its duty. A session was nigh at hand, when a report was to be made on the subject. Under these circumstances the MSS. were placed in the hands of one of the committee by his colleagues, with instructions to complete the work without delay. This only left time for compilation. In view of these facts the imperfection of the work, without any disparagement of its author, might have been predicted. It was the *family* dissatisfaction occasioned by what was deemed the material defectiveness of the work in setting forth the true character of Mr. Lee, that led the present writer, very soon after his entrance into the ministry in 1828, to enter upon a course of preparation for what he hoped to make a more complete and characteristic portraiture of his venerated relative. At a subsequent period, this meditation of his heart was confirmed on reading the meagre sketch and "faint praise" awarded to "the Apostle of Methodism in New England," by the author of "A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

But in prosecution of the self-imposed task he has met with difficulties, the anticipation of which would have deterred him from the undertaking. In the burning of the Methodist Book Room, in New York, in 1836, the MSS. of Mr. Lee, which had been deposited there for safe keeping, were entirely destroyed. This loss was severely felt at every stage in the preparation of the work. It may have been only partially surmounted in a resort to the selections of his former biographer, and to the facts and incidents of contemporaneous history. If, after all, any surviving friend of Mr. Lee should discover a defect in the portraiture of his character; or any, who have formed their judgment of him from the numerous anecdotes, yet extant and so often repeated, of



his wit and humour, should complain of their absence from the work : it is the solace of the author, that he can say to the *former*, he has "done what he could" to give perfection to his picture, after calling upon them in vain for assistance to enlarge, enliven, and colour it with a life-likeness ; and to the *latter*, that Mr. Lee had higher excellencies than wit, and holier instincts than mirth. Indeed, wit and mirth, which were but the sparkle of a superior mind and a cheerful heart, were only partial elements of a nature highly endowed and exquisitely adjusted for the work to which Providence assigned him. He was occasionally witty ; but he was habitually pious and prayerful. It is a humiliation, but it proves the waywardness of humanity, that his "readiness at repartee" is treasured and magnified ; while his humble devotion and earnest fidelity to God and man, are, if not altogether forgotten, not very highly esteemed, or remembered as a less popular peculiarity. It is to retrieve this feature of his character, and reproduce, as nearly as practicable, the living, active, pious man, that these proofs of his faith and love have been collected, and brought to the consideration of the Church.

The *times* in which Mr. Lee lived and laboured were full of interest. Methodism was then in its forming state. So also was society. They were adapted to each other. Both were young, ardent, and enterprising ; "rejoicing like strong men to run a race." The downfall of the English hierarchy, civil and religious, offered to both a career refulgent with righteousness and boundless as eternity. They entered it, and the race was for immortality. Let the civil historian describe the brilliant course our country has run in giving to Freedom a home. Ours is the less popular, but not less valuable or useful duty of recording the career of a Church foremost in giving liberty to conscience, and in carrying the joys of salvation to the weary and heavy-laden. The student of Methodist history must recur to the times comprehended in the following narrative, to learn the elements of its organization. He will never be able to analyze, explain, and defend the principles of the compact and strong system of Methodism, without familiarity with the opinions of the Fathers of the American Church, and the events of her earlier history. A large measure of this kind of information, not before

given in detail, will be found in the present volume. It was one leading object of the undertaking to bring to light facts and principles only partially known and imperfectly understood by the general reader. For his success in this desire of his heart his work must speak. He refers to it with a sincere and confiding trust that its biography may enliven the reader's religious experience, and its history augment his information and strengthen his confidence in the heaven-directed mission of Methodism. In these results he will find his first and holiest earthly reward.

RICHMOND, VA., March 1848.

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THE  
LIFE AND TIMES  
OF  
THE REV. JESSE LEE.

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CHAPTER I.

FROM HIS BIRTH IN 1758, TO HIS CONVERSION IN 1778.

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CIVIL history is made up of the feelings, schemes, and pursuits of individuals. Its private acts and public achievements are but a register of the virtues and vices of men. Nations are imperfections of character, taking their rank and measuring their influence from the virtue, intelligence, and enterprise of their subjects. We cannot separate the deeds and feelings of individuals from the grand aggregate of actions and events that give

character to a community, and stability to its laws and institutions. Communities of men are subject to the same laws of opinion and influence as individuals; number and magnitude only make them less impressible, and though quite as excitable, yet more deliberate in decision, and more resolute in action. A man is often the index of the age he lives in: his opinions are revelations, his principles the rule of conduct, and his conduct the standard of excellence and authority. Or, to change the figure, he so impresses his plans and purposes upon the civil character of his country, that it becomes to after ages the mirror of his principles and pursuits. Our own history furnishes a striking illustration of the truth of this sentiment. Washington is the Father of his country. Yet, in awarding this distinguished appellation, we feel that he is more eminently so amidst the implements and peaceable pursuits of husbandry, than with the weapons of war in the shock and blood of the battle. We boast of his personal prowess, and of his splendid military achievements; but we admire and commend his magnanimous self-denial and moral firmness, in forsaking the scenes of public and popular applause for the more humble enjoyments and quiet pursuits of domestic life.

The same principles and laws of influence are discernible in the history of Christianity and of churches. Jesus Christ is the embodied representation of religion. He lives in its principles, and breathes in its spirit. But it is the simple faith, the virtuous life, the self-denying benevolence of the Christian, that forms the living exhibition of the gracious influence of the gospel. Its spirituality has no other mode of manifestation. Man is the subject of its grace, the mirror of its truth and holiness. A partaker of grace himself, he becomes, by the laws of agency and influence, a dispenser of its blessings to others. "Ye are my witnesses," said Christ. Christians *are* witnesses. Their words are testimonials of the power and faithfulness of Christ, their lives a register of his forbearance and love. These give no uncertain sound, leave no undistinguishable impression upon the moral feelings of society. In their different spheres each is an "instrument of righteousness unto holiness." Facts are not wanting to set forth and confirm this idea of religious influence. Luther wrote the laws of religion upon the mind of Christendom

Wesley engraved the spirit of the gospel upon its heart. Both were "workers together with God;" and their "work was honourable and glorious."

Chalmers has defined Methodism as "Christianity in earnest." It is a definition no less candid than it is correct. The fundamental law of its vitality, that *grace to be preserved must be constantly employed*, is an exemplification of the existence and influence of this principle. Christianity has no state of quiescence. Activity in good works is the element and proof of spirituality. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." This principle presided over the origin of Methodism. It is still its great pervasive spirit. It is the lock of its strength, the master instrument of its vitality and success. So every Methodist feels; and so, if true to his feelings, he acts. All active, and always at work, are rules the specific value of which may be discerned in the form, consistency, and strength of Methodism. This was pre-eminently the characteristic of Wesley. The remark of the distinguished Robert Hall, "that while he set all in motion, he was himself perfectly calm and phlegmatic: the quiescence of turbulence;" is no less just as a tribute to Mr. Wesley's zeal and enterprise, than it is true of his power to move and influence others. The impression made upon society by his life and labours has survived his dissolution, and will stand out distinct and visible in the sublime emblazonry of the skies, when "suns and systems shall expire." The impulse given to the cause of religion by his laborious diligence to do good, will roll on, enlarging in volume and increasing in strength until it mingles its melody with "the voice of many waters" upon the far off shores of the coming eternity. The zeal for God, inborn in Wesley when "born of the spirit," was the source of his unresting energy, and the secret of all his success. It was of God; hence, it has not failed from the Church, and is yet prosperous as an instrument of multiplying the triumphs of Christianity. Faithful men, possessed of a like spirit, and animated by a zeal as commanding, if not as boundless and indefatigable, have been raised up to preserve the precious seed of life, and transmit it to the generations to come. Wesley yet lives in the zeal, enterprise, and enlarging prosperity of Methodism.

Numerous and distinguished is the company of those who have entered into Mr. Wesley's plans for spreading scriptural holiness in the earth; various their talents and endowments, and diversified the success that has crowned their faithful and persevering labours. The proofs of apostleship—fitness for the work, and success in winning souls to Christ—have not been wanting to substantiate their authority as "able ministers of the New Testament," and justify their claims as accredited messengers of Jesus Christ. Multitudes of regenerated men stand up to attest the power of their words, and confess them as fathers by whom they have been brought into the fellowship of the saints. Many of these first labourers, in the now vast and constantly enlarging field of Methodism, have entered into rest, and found a heavenly recompense for their earthly toils. But in England and America the remnants of a giant race are yet spared to represent the life-long zeal of the first Methodists. They are links binding us in unity of faith and feeling with the mighty men,—those men of renown, who, in the beginning of our history, braved the martyr's lot that they might preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ." They are here for example and encouragement. Their lives are histories of moral heroism. But they are solitary in the midst of their brethren. Their companions are gone; they sleep in the dust of the earth. And they, too, are passing away. A few generations more, and their names and good works will fade away from the memories of men. No monument will mark the place of their repose, as no record will preserve the history of their labours and triumphs in the vineyard of Christ. Yet their arduous toils, their patient sufferings, their generous self-denial, and their glorious achievements in the work of the ministry, are the heritage of the Church. They are recorded proofs of the presence and favour of God. Shall these perish and be forgotten?

It is the purpose of these pages to record the life and preserve a memorial of one of these worthy men. One whose name and ministry are linked in with the multitude of valiant men that distinguish and adorn the annals of American Methodism. Methodist history is imperfect without a more full and comprehensive record of his life and labours. His life was so prominent and public, and his labours so abundant and extensive, that he deservedly stands

in the foremost rank of the Fathers of the American branch of Wesleyan Methodism. Contemporary with Wesley, and acquainted with Coke, he was also the friend and companion of Asbury, Whatcoat, and M'Kendree. They belong to the same period, livé in the same events; and the trump that wafts the fame of one to the end of time must, if full and impartial, carry the others along in its course. We cannot reflect on the early events of our ecclesiastical history, its toils and triumphs, without a grateful remembrance of those strong-minded and warm-hearted men, whose zeal for God and the souls of men, has made their names "as ointment poured forth" to their sons and successors in the ministry. It is edifying to "call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that dwelt in them." It is impressive to witness their good works of faith and love. And the feelings with which we cherish their memory, and imitate their "godly and wholesome examples," is a part of that servitude to Christ which makes us "acceptable to God and approved of men." Among the men who, by their character and labours, gave strength and consistency to the ecclesiastical organization of Methodism, the name of JESSE LEE, the subject of these memoirs, occupies a distinguished place—for his fervent piety, solid attainments, laborious diligence, distinguished success, and extensive travels.

Jesse Lee was born in Prince George county, Virginia, on the 12th of March, 1758. He was the second son of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Lee. His parents were respectable members of society, moral in their deportment, upright in the engagements and occupations of life, and independent, though plain, in their domestic and social relations.

The records of the childhood and youth of Mr. Lee are few, and necessarily imperfect. They consist of detached passages, rather than of consecutive sketches. Yet enough has been preserved to show the prominent traits of his character, especially as they were developed and confirmed in subsequent and more mature periods of his life. Neither the time nor place of his birth were friendly, either from the tone of public sentiment, or the facilities afforded for the enlarged cultivation of the mind. Schools were scarce, the system of education partial and limited, and teachers exceedingly defective, both as to their acquirements and their

ability to communicate the meagre information they possessed.\* Of high schools and academies there were none in the country, and the only college in the province was that at Williamsburg. But such means as were within reach were freely used, and although we are in ignorance as to the time spent at school, and the amount of information gained, yet the subsequent events of his life indicate that a good foundation was laid, and a real thirst for improvement acquired. We know indeed that at "the proper age he was put to a school in the neighbourhood," that "as soon as he could read tolerably well" he was "directed to procure a prayer book, with a strict injunction to carry it to church every Sunday," and that "out of the prayer book he was taught the catechism." But how far he progressed in learning, or what capacities for improvement were developed, we have now no means of ascertaining. Nor is it really important to know either. A more extended education might have rendered him more useful, but it could scarcely have increased his zeal, or altered the character and efficiency of his labours.

There is no uncertainty, however, as to his moral progress. The impression made upon his moral nature by the course of catechetical instruction out of the prayer book, then constituting a part of the system of common school education, is distinctly and gratefully acknowledged. His teacher, it is presumable, was a Church-of-England-man, and according to the character of the times was possessed, at least, of "the form of godliness," and was

\* As an instance of what is here stated, the following facts in the early life of the Rev. D. Jarratt, will show how little was learned by a scholar, and how little was required of a teacher. In the memoirs of his life, edition 1806, pp. 20-25, he says: "At eight or nine years old I was sent to an English school in the neighbourhood: and I continued to go to one teacher and another, as opportunity served (though not without great interruptions), till I was twelve or thirteen. In this time I learned to read in the Bible (though but indifferently), and to write a sorry scrawl, and acquired some knowledge of arithmetic. With this small fund I left school." In the nineteenth year of his age he was called to preside over a school. He says, "I was so skilled in the Division of Crops, the Rule of Three, and Practice, that you may be sure the fame of my learning sounded far. One Jacob Moon, living in Albemarle county, about one hundred miles from New Kent (the place of Mr. Jarratt's birth), had already heard how learned I was." This was about the year 1750, and in a county contiguous to that in which Mr. Lee was born.

governed by a laudable desire to promote good order and sound morals among his pupils. The regular performance of "the morning service" on Wednesday and Friday of each week, was an important auxiliary in this benevolent and commendable undertaking. By this exercise the pupils became familiar with the language of the prayer book, and the forms of service, even though they remained ignorant of devotion, and failed to "worship God in spirit and in truth." It was not lost labour. The idea of religion, and the sense of responsibility were impressed upon their moral feelings; and these had a direct tendency to "prepare the way of the Lord." It is true "a more excellent way" was wanting. True spirituality in the teacher would have "esteemed every day alike," and "the evening service" as well as the morning, and service upon each day of the week, would have been brought to bear upon the moral nature of the pupils; and prayer *out of the heart* would have been as well understood, and quite as available and impressive, and certainly as effectual with God. But defective as was the character of the times, it is gratifying to discover signs of life even under the pall that pressed dark and heavily upon the Church—the coffin of spiritual religion. Still the object of these occasional services was not entirely lost upon the youthful subject of these memoirs. It is recorded that "when summoned to church on Sunday, he would seat himself in his pew, with his prayer book in his hand, and repeat the service in a manner which did credit to one of his age." Whatever may have been his feelings with respect to God, as the author of his being, and the source of his salvation, while he was so creditably repeating his prayers, it is certain, and the certainty affords a strong and positive argument for blending moral and mental instruction, that the impressions he received from the study of the catechism, were durable and beneficial. We have his own testimony on this subject. And it is so clear and decided as to its advantages, not only in one, but "in a thousand instances," that it may not be doubted. The effect of this testimony is greatly heightened by the fact that it was given when age and religion had removed the errors, and renewed and matured the impressions of childhood. He says: "In a thousand instances, when I felt an inclination to act and speak amiss, I have been stopped by the recollection of my catechism, some parts of which

I did not understand ; yet it was good upon the whole that I learned it." No doubt but it was *good*, notwithstanding he did not fully understand it. The comprehension of children is not the just standard of the instruction they ought to receive. There are truths that ought to be written upon the mind at a period so early as to preclude the possibility of knowing how or from whom they were derived. This may be done. And the preoccupation of the mind with principles of a moral and religious nature is no less easy of accomplishment than it is important to an early and dutiful submission to the claims of the gospel. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." So Inspiration teaches ; and observation will confirm the opinion that the yoke that is earliest assumed is longest and most faithfully borne. Parents and teachers have no holier employment, nor one more promising of a rich and abundant harvest than is found in the religious instruction of a child. Catechisms, such as are in general use among Protestant Christians, contain the seeds of Divine truth. These sowed in the heart will spring up, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life. And if there be a duty, to every element and feature of which the words of the wise man—"in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand"—may be applied with peculiar appropriateness and emphasis, it is to the religious education of children. The great first truths of the gospel, solemn and simple as they are, and so adapted to fill the mind with wonder and awaken it to strange and unutterable thoughts and feelings, when deposited in the mind of a child, and especially when fostered by systematic counsel, and encouraged by "a godly and wholesome example," cannot fail powerfully to affect and influence the moral nature, and work out the accomplishment of that blessed word of God which promises to crown a well-trained childhood with an old age of honour, usefulness, and quiet enjoyment. A parent's hand may shape the ends of life with respect to its character and pursuits ; and childhood requires a wise head, a good heart, and a steady hand to guide it. The non-reception of this catechetical instruction might have made the moral exception in Mr. Lee's case a very different affair, and given it a very dangerous preponderancy of evil. Instead of operating constantly and consecutively in checking his propensities to sin, it might have destroyed all restraints,



and left the native depravity of the heart to the original force of its aberrations, and of its acquired and ever accumulating temptations "to act and speak amiss." And then the exception in favour of rectitude of action and language, might have been only *one* out of "a thousand instances." In every view of the case, "*it was good that he learned it.*"

There was another element in the early education of Mr. Lee that had a direct tendency to impress and improve his moral feelings. It was the cultivation of the science of sacred music. In those days musical science was not so well understood, nor so extensively cultivated as it is at present. Yet it was not entirely neglected. There were singing-schools in various parts of the country; and the youth of both sexes were collected together for the purpose of learning to sing. Instrumental music, as the term is now understood, was not in vogue. It is doubted whether, except an occasional church organ, there were any musical instruments known to the great mass of the population in the country beside the fiddle, and the fife and drum. And it is quite certain that music was regarded more as a practical and useful acquirement than an elegant accomplishment. It was studied for useful purposes. And it is not an unmeaning fact that the science was confined almost exclusively to the cultivation of sacred melody. Vain and wicked songs, such as might have been common to the times, were not taught in the singing-schools. It was supposed, and very truly, that native depravity would acquire them with sufficient facility without the trouble and expense of teaching. Society would have lost nothing, and public morals might have been longer and better preserved if we had retained, in this respect at least, the correct views and quiet simplicity of our fathers. How far the lascivious sentiments, light airs, and exciting music, with their frivolous and often indelicate accompaniments, more recently introduced among us, contribute to the prevalent effeminacy of character, and increasing corruption of morals, are questions that appropriately belong to the moralist and the philosopher. But the historian may very properly state it as a fact that there is a very striking coincidence as to the period of their introduction, their progressive growth, and mischievous developements. Christian parents would do well to observe this connexion; and then settle the question as to the musical edu-

cation of their children with a wise and pious regard to its influence over the feelings, and upon the proper conduct of life. First impressions are too important and durable to be overlooked in "training a child in the way it should go." It is at least possible that some vain songs were common among the people of the times we are writing of; and it is not improbable that the youth whose life we are considering was familiar with some of them. He might have been fond of them. But the instruction of the singing-school, and the habits formed there, effectually dislodged them from their seat in his mind, and filled his memory, if not his heart, with "the concord of sweet sounds" that has always characterized the songs of Zion. Nor was this all. It rendered him familiar with church music, and prepared him to engage in that most delightful part of religious worship with a holy relish, and a just appreciation of its softening and subduing influence upon the moral feelings. And, in subsequent years, when called to stand in the holy place, as a messenger of the Lord of Hosts, he found his musical powers an important auxiliary in promoting the great work of God to which he devoted his life. His fine, clear, strong voice, under the peculiar circumstances attendant on his ministry, in carrying the gospel to new and strange places, was a trumpet that gave no uncertain sound in collecting a congregation. On a box in the field, a bench in the market, or beneath the spreading branches of a tree by the wayside, he would sometimes commence one of "the sweet songs of Zion," and thus attract a company of hearers to whom he would preach "Jesus Christ and him crucified, the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe."

These facts in the early history of Mr. Lee may serve as important hints to the right religious education of children. But they occupy a more eminent place in the records of his character while in its forming state. They were conjointly and positively influential in their operation upon him. Under the gracious sanction of Him "who worketh all in all," they gave activity to his moral feelings, and a right direction to his pursuits. They made him docile, "gentle and easy to be entreated;" and gave uprightness and integrity to his character. He was what would be, commonly and without hesitation, regarded as a youth of correct moral deportment, orderly in his habits, peaceable in his disposition,

cheerful and quiet with his associates, and submissive to the authority of his parents. If he was found, at any time, in wicked company, it was because, in the state of the times, he could find no pious associates. Religion was scarcely regarded as suitable for childhood and youth; manhood passed it by as too solemn for present attention, and age and sickness were conditions of life generally regarded as furnishing a good excuse for seeking "the benefit of clergy." Indeed, "a form of godliness," trimmed and fitted for the service of Sunday, was all that the prevalent impiety of the age had left, even to those who ministered at the altar; and the lines between virtue and vice were so indistinct, and so seldom drawn, that a gross profanity, or a very questionable morality, were the common grounds for distinguishing between them. "The failings of the clergy seldom leaned to virtue's side," and those of the laity were almost always in the opposite direction. Examples of vice were not wanting, even in high places, to any who chose to plead example as an excuse for their sins, or in extenuation of their disregard for holy things. Irreligion was common to all classes of society. But the general aspect of society had worse features than may be indicated by the mere absence of religious influence. There was positive vice. It was undisguised, openly practised, eagerly sought. The standard of morals was low. The mass of society were "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." There were few that did good; fewer still that sought after God. Vices, that a very low standard of morals would pronounce derogatory to the Christian profession, were common among those who partook of the holy communion. Union with the Church, as established by law, was the moral condiment that seasoned the misdeeds of the laity and ministered to their quiet, under circumstances of alarm from the fear of death, or the apprehensions of a future state. And "do as I *say*, not as I *do*," was, on the part of the clergy, the tribute-money that conscience offered on Sunday, in bribery for the licentiousness of the week. Drunkenness, gambling, sabbath-breaking, and various other immoralities, were notoriously common; and, no doubt, were sought with greater relish, from the fact, that judging from the example of the clergy, and other church officers, they were not regarded as incompatible with the Christian character. Some of the practices thus introduced as common to the

age, were, no doubt, indulged in by the family of Mr. Lee. But they were finally forsaken, and utterly renounced about the year 1772. This happy change occurred in his father's family, when he was about fourteen years of age. And he was soon after that favourable event brought to a spiritual perception of his lost condition as a sinner. He could not, therefore, have been in the habit of indulging in these vicious enjoyments. Yet it is not pretended that he was unacquainted with them, or that he did not occasionally participate in pleasures incompatible with strict morality. It is believed that he was fond of dancing, and of such engagements and associations as are common to scenes so irrational and frivolous. But of the more gross and licentious practices enumerated above, his youth, and generally moral deportment, protect him from all suspicion of participation. In a subsequent, and more mature period of his life, while reflecting upon the scenes now passing under review, he gave utterance to the following language: "I do not recollect that I ever swore in my life, except one night, being in company with some wicked young people, I uttered some kind of oaths, for which I felt ashamed and sorry all the next day, and when alone, I felt that God was displeased with me for my bad conduct. I believe I never did anything in my youth that the people generally call wicked. I used, however, to indulge bad tempers, and use some vain words." What people generally considered harmless, or not wicked, when Mr. Lee was a youth, would not pass currently now for a very high standard of goodness. Still it is gratifying to find him a little above, rather than just below that standard. And his aberration from "the good and the right way," of which, however, we have, except in what he derived from the catechism, very little ground for supposing him to have been even tolerably well informed, is relieved, in some measure, by the discovery of the shame and sorrow he experienced for having sinned against God. The openness of his confession, however, is a part, a most prominent and pleasing part, of his character. In youth and manhood, his character was unique; he had no concealments, and he was without guile. At the early age of which we are now writing, he had developed qualities of mind and traits of character that gave promise of a useful and happy life. He was industrious and cheerful, uniform in the temper of his mind, and

fond of social life. But there was no outer evidence of being included in "the covenants of promise." Indeed, he, and his father's house, were yet strangers and aliens; "without God, and without hope in the world."

The religious condition of Virginia during the early youth of Mr. Lee was most deplorable; yet there was the promise of a brighter and more blissful day. The settlement of the Rev. Devereux Jarratt in Bath parish, Dinwiddie county, contiguous to the residence of Mr. Lee, was, under the blessing of a wise and merciful Providence, the means of introducing religion into the family. Mr. Jarratt was a minister of the Church of England, which was then the established religion of Virginia. He was ordained in London in January 1763; reached Virginia in July; and on the 29th of August was elected minister of Bath parish. He entered at once upon a course of vigorous and earnest labour to fulfil the ministry he had received of the Lord to be faithful; and soon spread his efforts over a considerable district of country. His labours were not confined to the Sabbath, nor to the parish church; but during the week, day and night, and in private houses, he went about "testifying the gospel of the grace of God." Indeed, he was full of good works, and abundant in zeal; and his success in winning souls to Christ was as remarkable, as it was singular and surprising for a clergyman to have any zeal at all, or to evince any concern for the salvation of sinners. For several years he preached four or five times a week, and travelled through a circuit five or six hundred miles in extent.\* Labours so faithful, abundant, and persevering as these, could not fail to produce the most happy results. At different periods from 1764 to 1772 there were seasons of great spiritual interest. Many were brought to "the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." The churches were crowded; and, from but seven or eight partakers of the holy sacrament, multitudes thronged the altar to evince their submission to Christ and their love for each other. During these revivals "a great many souls were, in the judgment of charity, savingly converted to God, and obtained remission of sins, by faith in Jesus Christ." Among those thus "savingly converted to God" under the ministry of Mr. Jarratt

\* Life of the Rev. D. Jarratt, pp. 90-97.

was the father of Mr. Lee: a brief notice of whose character and conversion, especially as they sustain a direct and positive connexion with whatever was excellent in the conduct, or valuable in the labours of the subject of these pages, cannot be out of place here.

Mr. Nathaniel Lee was what in those days was considered a substantial farmer; the owner of several hundred acres of land, and of servants enough to cultivate them; producing on his own premises a sufficiency of what were deemed the necessities of life, and selling enough to procure some of its luxuries, he dwelt at ease, and in independence on his estate; dividing his time between the cultivation of his lands, the proper care of his family, and the promotion of the social happiness of his neighbourhood. His residence was about sixteen miles south of Petersburg, where three of his sons settled early in life, and where the remnant of their families yet reside. The forefathers of the family, it is supposed of both branches, were originally from England, and settled in Virginia at a very early period of its history. But very little, however, is now known concerning them. Yet there is reason to believe they were members of the Church of England, conforming to its rites and partaking of its sacraments. The names given to the children of Mr. Nathaniel Lee\* evince great reverence for the Scriptures; and since he did not make a profession of religion until after the birth of several of them, it indicates at least, the existence, and perhaps the prevalence of sound religious views and feelings in his father's house. But, however that may be, it is quite certain that he and his family were nominally connected with the English Episcopal church; and that some of his children were dedicated to God by baptism at its altars. At the period here referred to, religious privileges were very few as to number, and exceedingly defective in their character. Houses of worship were few and remote from each other; and ministers, for the most part, were scarcely moral. Sappony church, the principal place of worship in Bath parish, was about twelve miles distant from the residence of Mr. Lee; and the church of Bristol parish, situated in Blandford, now forming the burying-ground, and lying within the present corporate

\* Among these were Nathaniel, Jesse, Peter, John, Adam, Abraham; and Sarah, Rebecca, and Mary.

limits of Petersburg, was at least fifteen miles distant in another direction. These are certainly known to have been settled parishes previous to the revolution. There is presumptive evidence, however, for believing there was a place of worship, with a regular pastor, still more contiguous to the homestead of the family. The Rev. Jesse Lee, in the memoirs of his brother, the Rev. John Lee, says, of his parents, that they were "constant attendants on the Established church, or Church of England;" and that "they generally took their children with them to church, when they were old enough to receive instruction." These facts indicate the nearness and convenience of the place of worship. And it is within the recollection of one of the elder branches of Mr. Lee's descendants, now living, that there was within a few miles of his house, a place of worship, known as "Jones' Hole Church." But the same memory adds that the rector "was but a sorry preacher, and of very questionable character." So that although he was a stated worshipper at Jones' Hole Church, he was privileged occasionally to hear the Rev. Mr. Jarratt preach "all the words of this life" of which his heart was so full, and for which he was so zealous. These opportunities were blessed of God. The word opened his understanding, and brought him to perceive and feel his sinfulness and danger. He became a diligent seeker of salvation, and happily for himself, and many of his posterity, he found "redemption, even the remission of sins through the blood of atonement." This happy event occurred in the year 1772. The following narrative of his conversion, and of the introduction of religion into the family, was copied from the manuscript journal of his son Jesse, by the Rev. Minton Thrift, of Petersburg. It is a simple and unvarnished recital of a most gratefully remembered fact in the history and character of a numerous family:—

"In the latter part of the year 1772, my father became much more serious, and more engaged with God than formerly.

"One day when his conviction was deep, and his distress very great, he went into the woods, and continued travelling about, and mourning for his sins, till at length he claimed the promises of God, and by faith 'beheld the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,' and was 'justified freely by the blood of Jesus Christ.' The joy he felt in his soul he could not describe with

words. He had an evidence that his sins were forgiven, and that he was born again. This was the beginning of religion in the family; and my father's conversation about religion from that time astonished all."

In a sense, it is at least probable, far more extended and significant than was apprehended, it *was* the "beginning of religion in the family." Its influence is still felt, and its effects are yet visible, in the descendents, and through all the connexions of the family. The light thus kindled in the heart of Mr. Lee was a heavenly flame. It was holy oil that was burned there, and the light was neither "hid under a bushel," nor allowed to become dim. He had "found the pearl of great price," and he must needs tell of his wealth. It had been his purpose, while a penitent, not to reveal to any one the secret of God's gracious dealings with his soul. And when filled with the first love of the new-born soul, he thought of concealing his feelings from all. But as he approached his house his feelings expanded, and he concluded, as he concealed nothing of interest or importance from his wife, he would tell her of what the Lord had done for his soul. "And, as he began to tell her how the Lord had converted his soul, he burst into a flood of tears, and could not conceal the feelings of his heart. She also fell to weeping, and believed the truth of what she heard. The old gentleman never wished to keep his experience a secret any longer."\* The effect of this happy change was soon visible in the family of Mr. Lee. The recital of his conversion brought his wife to tears, and, under the agency of the Spirit, produced a "godly sorrow, that wrought repentance unto life." "For some months she diligently sought the Lord in earnest prayer. And some time in the following winter, while she was reading in the New Testament, the Lord spoke peace to her troubled soul; and there was, from that hour, a visible alteration in her life and conversation."

The parents being thus made "of one heart and one mind in the knowledge and love of God," not only changed their own modes of thinking and acting, but that change had a gracious effect upon the feelings and habits of the family, and exerted a subduing and

\* Life of Rev. John Lee, p. 11.



transforming influence upon the character of their children. It could not be otherwise, since they held fast to their first love, and maintained the integrity of their Christian character "steadfast unto the end." They had an altar of prayer for their household; and a closet—a secret place—where they poured out their hearts, and "made known their requests unto God." An entire change was wrought in their views, feelings, and pursuits; and its fruits were visible in their well ordered household, and their uniform and systematic devotion to spiritual things. Their conversation, in their families, and in their intercourse with their friends was of "conversion, the new birth, the comforts of religion, and the happiness *they* enjoyed." They spoke from the fulness of the heart. Religion, with them, was not a system of forms and ceremonies. It was a personal thing, both as to its duties and its enjoyments. Its field was the heart; its instruments, prayer, faith, self-denial; its fruits, holiness, usefulness, happiness. "If a man's sins were forgiven, he would *know* it," was a settled principle in their rule of judgment, as it was a fixed point in their personal experience. They could not doubt it. Their impressions of the change wrought in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and the coincident and corresponding change in their desires and purposes, were too strong and palpable to admit of doubt. "Old things had passed away—all things had become new." They knew that whereas they were once blind, they could now see. Spiritual things were no longer strange and shadowy mysteries of the imagination. They had a spiritual discernment, and the deep things of God were solemn realities, apprehended by faith, and standing out with sublime and awful distinctness before their minds. And so supreme and powerful did these new spiritual feelings become, that they invested, with a new and impressive interest, the most ordinary concerns of life; especially such as might operate upon the character of their children, or indicate their own sense of what was proper, or promising of usefulness in a Christian family. Their natures were changed. "The strong man" of sin and worldliness was turned out of their hearts, and they ejected him from their house, and were resolved that he should find no longer a resting-place within its sacred enclosure. It was henceforth to be, to them, and their children, a house of God.

It was the effect of this purpose that led Mr. Lee, immediately

after his conversion, to renounce, for himself and his family, all vain amusements, and to abandon the place of their indulgence, as well as the society of those who found pleasure in them. This decision as to his own personal conduct, and his domestic government, is thus described by his son :\*

“When I was a little turned fourteen years of age, my father refused to go to any place of amusement; and withal told his children they had better go no more. I thought, at times, that it was hard to be kept under such restrictions, inasmuch as I saw that other young people could go without being restrained; but it was not long before my father let us know that it was from religious motives he was led to act as he did. From that time I felt willing to forego the vain amusements of life, and to conform to my father’s will.”

The preceding extract furnishes a very commendable illustration of parental firmness, and filial reverence and submission. Both are admirable, and worthy of imitation. Mr. Lee took the right view of the matter, and marked out the proper path for himself and family. He was responsible for the faithful government of his house. He could not without sinning against God yield his authority, or tolerate improper conduct in those whom God had committed to his trust. Nor could he, compatibly with his character as a Christian, and his obligations as a father, allow his children to visit places and engage in amusements from which he was precluded by the nature and terms of his profession. Religious principle,—that sense of duty which was inwrought in his conscience by the Holy Spirit,—required him to take this stand; and, having taken, to maintain it. It would have compromised his character as a Christian, destroyed his influence as a Christian father, and, probably, have ruined the character and souls of his children, if he had adopted a lower standard of duty, or hesitated fully and faithfully to enforce it. The decision was a noble adhesion to the just rights of conscience. It placed him at once upon high ground in a holy place, and gave to his opinions and example a weight and influence that each one felt to be right and worthy of imitation. And the freedom with which he communicated to his tried and

\* *Memoirs of the Rev. Jesse Lee*, pp. 5-6.

tempted children the reason for seeming to proscribe their enjoyments, indicates the wisdom of his government and the benevolence of his character, and shows his paternal anxiety to bring them to the same blessed consummation of religious experience that he himself enjoyed. He would not conceal from them the purposes and hope of his mind with regard to their spiritual concerns, and he was unwilling to expose them to the temptation of misinterpreting his conduct, or misunderstanding the reasons upon which it was founded. Hence, in prohibiting improper amusements, and showing the "religious motives" that governed him in doing it, he satisfied their judgments, and opened a direct pathway to their hearts.

The happy effects of the spiritual change wrought in the heart and life of Mr. Lee, and of the firmness and benevolence of his character, were soon visible in his family. His views of duty, and the pious feelings he cherished, were continually reproduced in the altered habits and renewed lives of his children and domestics. Nor were they inoperative upon others. His house became the resort of such as sought after God; or, having found him, desired to "learn the way of the Lord more perfectly." On such occasions, "the topic of conversation was experimental religion." In topics of this nature he found great satisfaction; and so steadily and progressively did he improve in *experimental* religion, that at a subsequent period, in the year 1779, we find him spoken of by Bishop Asbury as a *father* in Israel.\* In the summer of 1774, before the formation of any circuits in Virginia, Mr. Lee, his wife, and two sons, Peter and Jesse, gave in their names as members of the Methodist societies.† Mr. Robert Williams, the first Methodist minister who visited that part of Virginia, had been preaching in the state since the early part of the year 1773,‡ without forming a regular circuit, and the family of Mr. Lee had attended his ministry, at every convenient opportunity, for about twelve months previously to their union with the Methodists. When he gave in his adhesion to the Methodists, they were societies in connexion with the Church of England. His choice of Christian fellowship was

\* Asbury's Journal.

† Life of Rev. John Lee, p. 12.

‡ Bangs's Hist. p. 73.

wisely and deliberately made, and when that connexion was destroyed by the downfall of the English establishment in 1776, he continued firm in his attachments, and faithful in his adherence to the body of Christians with whom he had linked his interests and his hopes. From the time of his union with the Methodists his house became a home for the preachers, and a regular place for preaching; and it continued so until the termination of his earthly course in 1820,—a period of nearly fifty years. Thus, for nearly half a century, he was in the habit of constant association, and enjoyed unreserved communion with these “servants of the Most High God.” The influence of these associations upon his own religious feelings, and upon the moral character and immortal destiny of his children and domestics, eternity only will develope.

The sound conversion, well regulated life, and improving religious experience of the parents, could scarcely fail to produce the fruits of righteousness in the hearts and lives of their children. Indeed, we would very naturally anticipate such a result. It is not surprising, therefore, to find two of the children uniting with the parents in a public profession of religion,—embracing the privileges, and assuming the responsibilities of “members of the body of Christ.” This act, on the part of the youth whose life we are recording, was deliberately and piously resolved upon under the conviction that he was a “partaker of the Divine nature,” and therefore solemnly obliged to enter into the fellowship of the saints in the courts of the Lord’s house. Of his awakening and conversion he always spoke gratefully, but undoubtingly, and with the confiding assurance of a living faith. About the fifteenth year of his age he was brought to a sense of his lost condition as a sinner; and some time during the spring of 1773, he found “redemption—even the remission of sins.” His own account of the gracious change wrought in his heart by the Holy Ghost is a simple narrative of the experience of all who have any just claims to be “called the sons and daughters of the living God.” His conviction was produced by an incidental remark of his father while engaged in a conversation on experimental religion with a pious relative. During the conversation in question, the elder Mr. Lee maintained, in its simplest interpretation, and to its fullest extent, the doctrine of “the assurance of salvation;” and, as

embodying his views, and consonant with his personal experience, he gave utterance to the sentiment—"If a man's sins *were* forgiven him, he would *know* it." These words were, by the powerful working of the Spirit, fixed in the mind of the son, "as a nail in a sure place." To use his own words, they "took hold of his mind, and he pondered them in his heart." The Master of Assemblies fastened them deep in the soul. That night, and the next day, he says, "they kept running across my mind;" chasing away the illusions of sin, and the delusions of a false hope, until he was led seriously to reflect, and humbly to pray. He asked himself, "Are *my* sins forgiven?" "No," was the terrible and startling response of conscience. He fled to the solitude of the woods, and essayed to pray; but the tempter whispered that he was watched, and again and again he fled to seek a deeper solitude, a more secret hiding-place. His distress was great,—he felt himself a great sinner. A sense of his sinfulness, and of his exposure to the punishments threatened against sinners, embittered all the pleasures of life, and made him call upon God with strong crying and tears. He says, "I would frequently get by myself, and with many tears pray to God to have mercy upon my poor soul, and forgive my sins. Sometimes in the open fields I would fall on my knees, and pray and weep till my heart was ready to break. At other times my heart was so hard that I could not shed a tear. It would occur to my mind, 'Your day of grace is past, and God will never forgive your sins.' It appeared to me that of all sinners in the world I was the greatest; my sins appeared to me greater in magnitude and multitude than the sins of any other person." In this state of distress, he was entirely destitute of religious associates, with whom he might have taken sweet counsel. There were no young people in the neighbourhood who were pious, and he felt a repugnance or dread to communicate his feelings to the aged. And besides, he felt himself to be so desperate a sinner, that he did not wish any one to know how bad he was. For four weeks, he never, for an hour, lost sight of his wretched condition. The cry of his soul was, "How shall I escape the misery of hell?" The Bible, the book of promise and consolation, was the minister of evil tidings to his soul. The flaming sword was flashing from the very centre of its conso-

lations. He was afraid to ask the blessings he sought, and longed to possess, lest he might incur the condemnation of asking amiss. But the day of his redemption was drawing nigh. God, who is rich in mercy to all them that call upon him, was not unmindful of his promise to save them that seek him with weeping and fasting and repentance—the bitter fruits of transgression. As a servant to the hand of his master, he was looking upward to God in the heavens. He had reached the extremity of distress, and was in living dread of the damnation of hell. “One morning,” he says, “being in deep distress, and fearing every moment I should drop into hell, and viewing myself as hanging over the pit, I was constrained to cry in earnest for mercy, and the Lord came to my relief, and delivered my soul from the burden and guilt of sin.” He found “peace and joy in believing,” and felt, through all his soul, the bliss of pardoning love. “My whole frame,” he writes, “was in tremor from head to foot, and my soul enjoyed sweet peace. The pleasure I then felt was indescribable. This happiness lasted about three days, during which time I never spoke to any person about my feelings. I anxiously wished for some one to talk to me on the subject, but no one did.” The result of thus concealing the precious gift of God was the loss of the evidence of a gracious state. He fell into doubt, and was subject to many perplexing fears. This state of inquietude continued about six months before he could assuredly believe he was in the favour of God. A religious neighbour with whom he was travelling, asked him if he “was ever converted?” This question led to a conversation which greatly strengthened him, and encouraged him to tell others what the Lord had done for his soul. He renewed his importunities with God, and soon after he received such a manifestation of the presence and power of God as satisfied him of his acceptance in the Beloved, and filled him with peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” He was born of the Spirit, and he went his way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

These seasons of protracted and increasing darkness, preceding, as they did, the ushering in of a bright and joyous day, and especially as they are connected with the subsequent steadfast faith and joyous experience of Mr. Lee, serve, in some measure, to show the way of the Spirit in preparing the young heart for the sturdy

endurance of a life of toil and self-sacrifice. A believer in the doctrine of a special designation to, and a personal spiritual preparation for, the holy work of the ministry, will readily perceive how this deep spiritual distress was working out a class of religious emotions, and forming and maturing a character whose only happiness would consist in vigorous self-denial, and active efforts to do good. The feelings consequent upon the change wrought in the heart of this youth, would have found congenial employment in a laborious and scarcely promising effort to build the temple of God in the heart of a little child; and it would have found or invented means of doing good in the most barren and desolate moral waste. A fountain was opened in his heart from whence pure waters were to flow out, to irrigate soils that had been desolate, and give vitality to trees that hitherto had borne no fruit.

His caution, amounting to fear; his hesitancy to speak of the gracious dealings of God with his soul, indicate his determination to be satisfied with nothing short of the realization of God's power to save. The ministry it was his privilege to attend; the experience of his pious and happy parents, the details of which he had often heard; and the strivings of the Spirit within him, held out the promise of a present full salvation, and led him to anticipate the *knowledge* of salvation, the joyous experience of God's grace in justification; in a word, to expect "the Spirit itself to bear witness with his spirit that he was a child of God." And it was even so. He knew in whom he had believed, and was joyful in the God of his salvation.

The revival of religion that brought so large an amount of un-mixed good into the family of Mr. Lee was the result of God's blessing upon the labours of Mr. Jarratt. During the years 1770 and 1771 there had been a gracious outpouring of the Spirit at a place called White Oak, in Dinwiddie county. In this neighbourhood Mr. Jarratt frequently held meetings during the week, and in private houses. His custom, on such occasions, was to descend from the stiff and formal services of the church, and conduct the exercises in a familiar conversational manner; addressing plain and searching questions to various individuals; and encouraging all present to ask him any questions that they might feel necessary to their better acquaintance with spiritual things, or for the remo-

val of their doubts and fears.\* Such a method could not fail to produce serious impressions upon the minds of the people. Or, if the preaching of the word, in the church, had awakened reflection, these questions, and the instructions accompanying them, were well calculated to increase conviction, and facilitate conversion. And while it tended to promote correct views of the gospel, as a system of Divine principles, and a gracious method of saving sinners, it also afforded him an excellent opportunity of ascertaining the religious condition of the people, and prepared him to adapt the ministrations of the pulpit to the actual wants of his hearers. From such plans of doing good, seconded, as they were, by the most laborious zeal and diligence, the very best results might be expected. His labours were greatly blessed. At the time he settled in Virginia few parishes had more than seven or eight regular communicants, and these were chiefly among the aged and infirm. The great mass of society cared for none of these things.† But so great was the success of his ministry, that in less than ten years the communicants within reach of the parish church had increased to "nine hundred or one thousand." "A great part of these," he says, "I trust, were gracious souls, and such as were truly in earnest to work out their salvation."

In this "labour of love," strange as it may seem, Mr. Jarratt, though without the sympathy and co-operation of the clergy, was not without their marked aversion, and persevering opposition. He says, "At my first settlement in the parish, I knew of no minister, of the then Established Church, who was like-minded with

\* The following questions and the answers he received will serve the double purpose of illustrating his manner of conducting these meetings, and of showing the profound spiritual ignorance of the people. They are copied from his Life. Ques. "What is the difference between the law and gospel?" Ans. "I know not of any difference—or, I know not one from the other." Ques. "What is the covenant of grace, and what are the terms of it?" Ans. "I know not—I never heard of a covenant of grace, or of any other covenant whatever." Ques. "What is conversion?" Ans. "I know not—I never heard such a word in all my life, till I heard it from you." Ques. "What is regeneration—or the new birth?" Ans. "I never heard of either—the words are new to me." Ques. "Is a man justified by his own works?" Ans. "To be sure—or I know not what is to justify him."

† Life of Rev. D. Jarratt, p. 102.



myself, respecting the doctrines I preached and the manner of preaching them. I stood alone for some considerable time; and I dare say no man was ever more cordially abhorred, than I was by the clergy in general. By *them* was I frequently threatened with writs and prosecutions, &c., for the breach of canonical order. One of the most furious wrote me two angry and threatening letters, reminding me of irregularity, and breach of the 71st canon, by preaching in private houses." To the second of these ungracious letters Mr. Jarratt replied, "That if to preach in a private house, or on unconsecrated ground, was a breach of canonical order and regularity, then were we all involved in the same condemnation, for I knew not that any clergyman in Virginia ever scrupled to transgress that canon, for the sake of forty shillings. This was the legal fee for a funeral sermon, under the Establishment, and for the sake of which, all places were alike sacred, when any clergyman was called upon for such a service. I therefore asked my incensed brother, whether I, who preached in such places without fee or reward, could be more culpable than those who were paid for it? . . . Moreover, as I knew my testy brother to be very fond of cards, dice, tables, &c., which are expressly forbidden us, by the 75th canon, I made free to ask, if it was not as criminal, and more so, to break the 75th as the 71st canon?" It can occasion no surprise, after such a reply, to find that Mr. Jarratt closes his notice of these shameful transactions with the significant remark—"from that time I heard no more of the canons."\*

It is due, however, to truth and historical accuracy, to state that at an early period of his ministry, in Bath parish, Mr. Jarratt formed an acquaintance with a "clergyman in whom some good thing was found." This was the Rev. Mr. M'Robert. It is believed he was the rector of Dale parish, Chesterfield county. The parish church was called Ware Bottom. The vestiges of the old parish church may still be seen near the Methodist Episcopal house of worship of the same name. Of Mr. M'Robert, Mr. Jarratt bears the following honourable testimony: "He had great gifts for the pulpit, and spoke with a degree of animation very unusual at that time; but, like another Apollos, stood in need of being instructed in

\* Life of Jarratt, pp. 98, 101.

the way of the Lord more perfectly." Such instruction he derived from intercourse with Mr. Jarratt. They became "dear brethren, and faithful fellow-labourers in the work of the Lord; and were a great comfort to each other, visited each other frequently, travelled together, and for many years assisted each other in diffusing the savour of the knowledge of Christ." But the improved personal piety of Mr. M'Robert, not only gave a new impulse to his zeal, but induced him to examine his church relations with reference to the obligation of remaining in a church so inefficient, and of maintaining a connexion with a body of ministers so generally unworthy and wicked. The result of the examination was the abandonment of the Establishment. He renounced the Church in the year 1779, and some time after entered into the fellowship of the Presbyterian Church. In 1794 he was yet living and labouring, and, according to the testimony of Mr. Jarratt, "still had the cause of God at heart."\* It is a singular instance of the peculiarities even of good men, and of the influence of early prepossessions, that, notwithstanding the prevailing impiety and bitter hostility of the clergy, Mr. Jarratt still preferred a nominal fellowship with them to real and spiritual communion with those whom he acknowledged as "living members of the body of Christ." Like the vine, he clung to the Establishment even after its vitality and beauty were gone, and long after he had relinquished the hope of its resurrection to life and activity in the work of the Lord.

The circumstances connected with the early religious life of Mr. Lee, were well adapted to his spiritual improvement. The holy lives of his parents were an example worthy of imitation, ever present to his mind and always speaking to his heart. The regular private and public services of religion in his father's house, made it a holy place, full of holy influences and associations, to renew his religious impressions and quicken his pious feelings. And these were all kept awake and active by the presence and instructions of a class of ministers full of faith, and always zealously affected in a good cause. In frequent and familiar intercourse with these holy men he was greatly strengthened, and his profiting appeared unto all. By privileges such as these, the fire of sacred love, enkindled

\* Life of Jarratt, pp. 100, 101.

in his heart by the Holy Ghost, was kept constantly and brightly burning. He was "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." Although, it is presumable, the way of life in which it was the purpose of God to lead him was not present to his mind, it is not improper to regard these opportunities, and their conjoint influence upon his moral nature, as indications pointing to the ministry of reconciliation, and designed to work in him a sense of its responsibilities, and a fitness for its employments.

The introduction of Methodism into Virginia is to be regarded as one of those events which find their solution, "not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The time was auspicious—the event proves it to have been providential. Religion was a Sunday exercise, an empty round of mere forms. The clergy, with the exceptions previously noted, were avaricious and immoral; preaching, marrying, burying, for so many pounds of tobacco per annum, or for so many shillings per service. The people, in religious things, were on a level with their pastors; in morals, they could scarcely be lower. It was then the humble missionary came preaching peace by Jesus Christ. Alone, unknown, and unprotected, warm of heart, and confiding in God, he proclaimed the day of salvation. Multitudes listened, and were enlightened; a few gave heed, and were saved. God's work was commenced. Its consummation belongs to the future historian.

## CHAPTER II.

FROM HIS CONVERSION IN 1773, TO HIS ENTRANCE INTO  
THE MINISTRY IN 1779.

Religious Condition of England—Wesley—Rise of Methodism—Providential Introduction of it into America—Robert Williams—Visits Norfolk, Va.—Mr. Pillmore visits Southern States—Controversy with a Clergyman in Norfolk—Great Wickedness of the People—Second Visit of Mr. Williams—Preaches in the Street—Effect on the Hearers—Visits Petersburg—Forms a Circuit—House of Mr. Lee opened for Preaching—Great Revival in 1774-5—Co-operation and usefulness of Mr. Jarratt—Effects of the Revival upon the Religious Character of Mr. Lee—Anxiety to do Good—First Public Exhortation—Death of R. Williams—His Character and Usefulness—Removal of Mr. Lee from his Father's House—Appointed Class-Leader—Habits of Study—Preaches his First Sermon in 1779—Supplies the Place of J. Dickens—What Constitutes a Call to the Ministry—Increase of Methodism in Virginia.

THE light of the blessed Reformation which sprung up under Luther, and spread with so much rapidity through Europe, had become well nigh extinct in England at the birth of Wesley. The "form of godliness" was all that was left of that beauty of holiness which had once, and for a long season, adorned the ministry and membership of the Established Church. "Like priest like people," and "the parson's son is the worst boy in the parish," were proverbs no less true in themselves than they were characteristic of the times and the manners. Vice clad in priestly garments, read sermons and uttered prayers in the pulpit, and immorality, without even the covering of the "filthy rags of self-righteousness," sent back its responses from the softly cushioned pews. The Church, with but here and there an exception, was a vast "valley of death filled with the dry bones of the dead." The stillness of worldly prosperity had lulled the watchers to sleep, and the winds of error and false doctrine had spread spiritual death over the heritage of Christ, and finished what worldliness had begun. The fine gold had become dim. While the clergy slept, the people were perishing. Crowd after crowd passed into the valley of death, and multitudes,

heedlessly and without warning, pressed upon their steps, and each, as it entered the precincts of the gloomy vale, sent back its forlorn and despairing cry—"No man careth for my soul." Religious fears and feelings were almost obliterated from the minds of the people, and infidelity and ungodliness pervaded all ranks and conditions of life. A second reformation was needed—a reformation that would bring "the *power* of godliness," in its solid principles and transforming experience, to bear upon the moral nature of man. A reformation was needed, but a *revival*, great, powerful and pervasive, was mercifully vouchsafed. God's work of "grace, mercy, and peace," was graciously revived. God gave the word—great was the multitude that went forth to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

John Wesley was the foremost in this work. His preaching was a simple and faithful, but powerful exhibition of the scriptural doctrines of justification by faith, the witness of the Spirit, and entire holiness of heart and life. These were novel doctrines, such as were found in the homilies, but not in the pulpits of the Establishment.\* The lives, ministry, and writings of the clergy were in positive contrast with them, and hence the general and persevering opposition to his course. But the truth was mighty, and it triumphed. Multitudes in every corner of the land flocked to his ministry. Many were convinced of sin, and were brought to a personal and happy realization of the truth of the doctrine—we are "justified by faith." It was natural for those brought to God by his instrumentality, to seek religious counsel of him. This originated Methodism. The first Methodist society was formed in London in the latter part of the year 1739. A similar course was

\* Sept. 13, 1739. "A serious clergyman desired to know in what points we differed from the Church of England. I answered, 'to the best of my knowledge, in none. The doctrines we preach are the doctrines of the Church of England; indeed, the fundamental doctrines of the Church, clearly laid down, both in her Prayers, Articles, and Homilies.' He asked, 'In what points, then, do you differ with the other clergy of the Church of England?' I answered, 'In none from that part of the clergy who adhere to the doctrines of the Church; but from that part of the clergy who dissent from the Church (though they own it not), I differ in the following points.'" He then enumerates Justification, Sanctification, and the New Birth, and points out the grounds of difference between them. Wesley's Works, Amer. edit.; vol. iii. pp. 153, 154.

pursued wherever his ministry succeeded in turning men "from the power of Satan unto God;" and thus, without any previous design, or any matured plan of organization, he became the founder of the Methodist branch of the Church of Christ.

The introduction of Methodism into America was brought about by providential arrangements, rather than by any preconceived human plans. When Wesley commenced his public ministry in Great Britain, the present United States were colonies, under the protection, and subject to the laws of England. The population of the country was chiefly composed of emigrants from the United Kingdom. And it was by this means that Methodism was brought into the country. The first Methodist society was formed in the city of New York, in 1766, under the ministry of a local preacher from Ireland, the Rev. Philip Embury. Within a very short time after the formation of the society in New York, the Rev. Robert Strawbridge, also a local preacher from Ireland, settled in Frederick county, Maryland, and commenced holding public meetings, and formed a society near Pipe Creek. About the same time a society was formed in Philadelphia.\* Under the direction of the society in New York, a letter was written to Mr. Wesley, informing him of the condition and wants of the societies in America, and earnestly imploring him to send ministers to their help.† Mr. Wesley laid the case of the infant societies in America before the Conference held at Leeds, in August 1769, when "Richard Boardman and Joseph Pillmore willingly offered themselves for the service," were accepted, and sent to America. They reached Philadelphia on the 24th of October in the same year. Soon after their arrival, Mr. Robert Williams, a local preacher, came to New York, having "received a permit from Mr. Wesley to preach in America, under the direction of the regular missionaries." In 1771, Mr. Francis Asbury and Mr. Richard Wright were sent to America by Mr. Wesley. They landed in Philadelphia on the 27th of October. From these principal points Methodism went forth upon its grand moral enterprise, "to spread scriptural holiness over these lands,"—a great

\* A Short History of the Methodists, &c., by Rev. Jesse Lee, pp. 24-26.

† Bangs's History of the M. E. Church, Vol. i. p. 52.

spiritual mission through wide "fields already white unto the harvest."

Mr. Williams, after preaching awhile in New York, visited Mr. Pillmore in Philadelphia, and from thence he travelled into Maryland. In the early part of the year 1772, he was in Norfolk, Virginia, where his preaching produced great excitement, and he was successful in forming a society. How long he remained in Norfolk, or whether he visited any of the adjacent counties or towns, we have now no means of ascertaining. It is, however, certain, that in the fall of the year he was in Maryland, preparing for a second and a more extensive tour through Virginia.\*

"In April 1772, a plan was laid for Mr. Pillmore to travel to the south;" and accordingly he "travelled and preached through Maryland to Norfolk in Virginia." He reached Norfolk, it is presumable, in the summer, and remained preaching regularly until the early part of the year 1773. He then travelled through the eastern portions of Virginia and North Carolina; and after spending a short time in Charleston, he went "to Savannah, in Georgia, and from thence he visited the Orphan House, begun by Mr. Whitfield in 1740." This visit was a short one, undertaken, it is likely, for the purpose of ascertaining the probabilities of success in sending ministers "into the harvest."† He returned to Norfolk some time in the spring. Before Mr. Pillmore started on this tour of observation, he was reinforced by the arrival of the Rev. Messrs. R. Williams, and W. Watters. These ministers arrived in Norfolk some time in October or November, 1772. Mr. Watters spent some time in endeavouring to form a circuit contiguous to Norfolk, but after the departure of Mr. Pillmore to the south, took his place, and continued in the pastoral oversight of the society until his return. Mr. Williams had gone on a preaching excursion to Petersburg, and the adjacent counties. The following extract from the journal of Mr. Watters, will show that a society had been formed in Norfolk, although it says very little for the piety of those composing it. He says, page 27, "Weary and much worn down, we

\* Life of Watters, p. 24. Lee's Hist. of Methodists, p. 40.

† Lee's History of Methodists, p. 40. This conjecture is sustained by the fact, that during the same time Mr. Boardman had travelled north as far as Boston.

at length came to our journey's end. Our friends in Norfolk received us kindly, but I found very little satisfaction among them for some time; their convictions were slight, and their desires very faint, and far the greater part of them could hardly be said to have the form of religion. Such Methodists I never had seen, nor did I suppose there were such upon earth; my experience and warm feelings led me to conclude that all who bore the name must be like those with whom I had been acquainted in the neighbourhood I had left. Many hundreds attended preaching, but the most hardened, wild, and ill behaved, of any people I had ever beheld in any place." It is at least probable that the "experience" (he was a *young* Christian) of Mr. Watters, and his "warm feelings," might furnish an apology, or at least some ground for supposing the Methodists of Norfolk were not altogether as bad as he regarded them. The picture is a strong one; it may be indebted for this to the warmth of the writer's feelings. It is quite certain that the preaching of Mr. Pillmore produced a considerable impression upon the public mind. His zeal and faithfulness in preaching the then common and principal doctrines of a present, free, and full salvation through faith in Christ, had brought down upon the infant society the vigorous, and, in that day, customary, opposition of the parish minister. During the absence, but, to his surprise, just before the return of Mr. Pillmore, the clergyman preached a sermon, in which he undertook to represent the Methodists as enthusiasts and deceivers. The text selected for this notable purpose was, "*Be not righteous overmuch.*" In the discourse, among other things, he told the people (what none of them would have otherwise suspected,) that *he knew, from experience, the evil of being over-righteous.* He failed to establish his positions, and said so much that his friends were dissatisfied. If he thought Mr. Pillmore would not return, or that he would take no public notice of the matter, he was sadly disappointed in his expectations. Mr. Pillmore returned in a very few days, and soon gave public notice of his intention to preach on the verse next following the parson's text:—"Be not *overmuch wicked.*" At the hour appointed the town seemed to be in motion, and a great crowd collected at the place of preaching. After reading his text, he said he had been informed that a certain divine of the town had given the citizens a *solemn caution against*



*being over-righteous.* Then lifting up his hands, and with a very significant countenance, he exclaimed—"And in Norfolk he hath given this caution!!!" That was enough. The conduct of the parson was rendered odious and contemptible, and the people were unexpectedly, but severely, rebuked. What other effect the controversy produced we know not. The writer of these notices concludes his personal recollections of Norfolk, in the following simple and characteristic language: "Though these were severe reproofs, and from one capable of forming a sound judgment, yet Norfolk continued Norfolk as long as I knew anything about it: and it was no ways strange to me that in a few years it was consumed by fire." Again, on page 34, he speaks of Norfolk as "the most wicked place I ever set my foot in."\* The religious prospect in Portsmouth was considered more promising by Mr. Watters, yet he thought "the real work in both places was very superficial indeed." "What hath God wrought!" Now, in 1847, Norfolk, to use the idea of Mr. Watters, is less Norfolk than it was in 1772. And Portsmouth is full of the blessed fruits of what it then so richly promised to diligent and faithful cultivation. Were the warm-hearted author of the above notices now living, and could he visit places once so full of the leaven of wickedness, he would find in each a large and pious Church, zealous for God, and active in every good work; and in a far different sense he might exclaim, "Such Methodists I have never or rarely seen."

The visit of Mr. Williams to Norfolk in the fall of 1772, above mentioned, was not the first time he had appeared there on the purposes of his mission. He had, according to the account of the Rev. Jesse Lee,† preached in Norfolk "in the first part of the year." His preaching was singularly earnest and pointed, and produced a powerful sensation. The following account of it, especially as Mr. Williams is unquestionably to be regarded as the

\* Mr. Watters was not alone in his opinion of the wickedness of Norfolk, as the following anecdote of Mr. Pillmore will show. On his return from the south, "as Mr. P. passed through Portsmouth, two men, well dressed, were cursing most horribly. He lifted up his hands, and with a stern voice exclaimed aloud—'Well! if I had been brought to this place blindfolded, I should have known I was near Norfolk.'"

† History of the Methodists, p. 40.

Apostle of Methodism in Virginia, and also as he received the family of Mr. Lee into the fold of the Church, cannot prove otherwise than interesting.

"In the first part of the year 1772, Mr. Robert Williams made his first visit to Norfolk, in Virginia, and without any previous notice being given, he went to the court-house, and standing on the steps of the door, and beginning to sing, the people collected together; and after prayer he took his text and preached to a considerable number of hearers, who were very disorderly, as they all thought the preacher a madman: and while he was preaching the people were laughing, talking, and walking about in all directions. The general conclusion was, that they never heard such a man before: for they said, 'sometimes he would preach, then he would pray, then he would swear, and at times he would cry.' The people were so little used to hearing a preacher say hell, or devil, in preaching, that they thought he was swearing, when he told them about going to hell, or being damned if they died in their sins. As he was believed to be a madman, none of them invited him to their houses. However, he preached at the same place the next day, when they found out he was not insane, and they were glad to get him to their houses. This may be considered as the beginning of Methodism in Virginia. And it was not long before a Methodist society was formed in the town of Norfolk."\* From the account that has reached us of the character of Mr. Williams, this may be regarded as a very just description of his preaching.

It was in the latter part of the year 1772, or the beginning of 1773, that Mr. Williams commenced preaching in the neighbourhood of Petersburg. He spent one week in the family of Mr. Jarratt, and preached several times in his parish.† He extended his labours through many of the contiguous counties, and a very general awakening seems to have attended his ministry. Early in 1774 he commenced forming societies; and in the summer laid the plan of a circuit that, beginning at Petersburg, extended some distance into North Carolina. It was called Brunswick circuit. This

\* History of the Methodists, p. 41.

† Life of Jarratt, pp. 107-110.

was the first regular circuit formed in Virginia. There were at that time 1160 Methodists in America. Of these one hundred were in Virginia. These were converted principally under the ministry of Mr. Williams. "The foundation of God standeth sure; because it is laid in truth and righteousness." In these small beginnings, God was mercifully preparing the way for richer and more amazing displays of his grace. The people had long sat in the very shadow of spiritual death. But the time of deliverance was drawing nigh. A fire was kindled in Virginia that burns yet, and will grow brighter and brighter through the coming periods of time.

The family of Mr. Lee having connected themselves with the societies under the pastoral care of Mr. Williams, he opened his house for preaching, and it was taken as one of the regular appointments of the newly formed circuit. The opening of his house for the public worship of God was of great spiritual benefit to the family. It was especially so to the youthful subject of these pages. He was necessarily often in the company of the ministers, and derived from his intercourse with them both pleasure and profit. This intercourse was highly prized by him. It was indeed a great privilege, and its results were, no doubt, seen in the choice and pursuits of his subsequent life. There was at least, a present, direct, and powerful influence exerted over him by these opportunities of social intercourse. But it was chiefly in the preaching of the word, and the worship usually connected with it, that he found most instruction and comfort. A sermon preached soon after the formation of the church in his father's house, it is presumable, by Mr. Williams, had the happy effect of awakening in his mind a solemn sense of the necessity of inward holiness. He was, and had been from the beginning of his Christian course, happy in the consciousness of acceptance in the Beloved. Yet he felt the workings of sin in his members, and was sometimes "in heaviness through manifold temptations." In the sermon alluded to, the minister spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and of the sanctification of soul, body, and spirit, as the gracious effect of that work. The impression it made on his mind was deep and abiding. He sought to know the mind of the Spirit as it is revealed in the word of God, and found it demanded holiness of heart and life—holiness in principle and feeling, in thought, word, and action, and a will subdued

and submissive to the will of God. He saw that the Bible pointed to the atonement of Christ as to a fountain of life and salvation, and that it was a "fountain *opened* for sin and uncleanness." The need of being cleansed from unrighteousness he already painfully felt, and he was conscious that all his salvation was "hid with Christ in God;" and he was resolved to seek the gracious fulfilment of the promise: "I will circumcise thy heart,—and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." In secret places he poured out his soul before God. He called earnestly upon God. His prayer was heard, his faith accepted, and he was made to rejoice in hope of being cleansed by the all-sufficient grace of Christ. And if he was not at that time, "washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God," yet he was full of faith, full of peace, full of love. In the strength of that blessing he went many years. It was a green spot in his memory, fresh and fruitful even in age and dissolution. Yet his soul was still longing for *perfect* love.

The labours of Mr. Williams were still a blessing to the people in the neighbourhood in which Mr. Lee resided. In the latter end of the year 1774, there was a great revival of religion. Many of the friends and acquaintances of Mr. Lee were brought to experience the pardon of sin, and the assurance of salvation. In this revival his own soul was greatly blessed, and he esteemed it a privilege to attend the meetings, although he had to walk many miles to do it. Speaking of this revival, he says: "I felt greatly quickened and comforted with the Divine Presence. I had little inclination to be in any other than religious company. I was always glad to go to meeting by night or by day, and sometimes went on foot many miles, and thought myself highly favoured in that respect."

In the year 1775, the circuit formed by Mr. Williams was supplied with three able and effective ministers. These ministers were full of zeal, and were "in labours abundant." Their preaching was accompanied by evidences of power and success truly marvellous. The account given of this revival by Mr. Lee, sustains this idea of its character. He says: "It was quite common for sinners to be seized with a trembling and shaking, and from that to fall down on the floor as if they were dead: and many of them have been con-

vulsed from head to foot, while others have retained the use of their tongues so as to pray for mercy, while they were lying helpless on the ground or floor." The zeal of Christians in those days was only less than that which animated the hearts of the chosen ministers of Christ. They were all "workers together with God." If the Lord opened the heart of a sinner under the preaching of his word, preachers and people would gather around him to instruct and pray for him; and they would protract their meetings for days together, and to late hours at night, if haply they might further the cause of Christ. Mr. Asbury, who, in the early part of the year, had charge of the societies in Norfolk and Portsmouth, visited Brunswick circuit in November, and rendered very efficient service in the revival. They also had the very valuable aid of Mr. Jarratt. Mr. Lee, in his History, page 54, says, "Mr. Jarratt was very useful in that revival, *and his heart was closely united with the Methodists*. He would frequently preach, meet the classes, hold love-feasts, and administer the Lord's Supper among them. He was an eye-witness of this work." The work thus powerfully begun was not partial in its effects, nor short in its duration. Thousands were converted to God during its progress; and it extended through a district of country several hundred miles in extent. For several years successively, these revivals prevailed, to the great comfort of God's people, and the rapid multiplication of believers. Nor have the influences then set in motion yet ceased to operate. Many yet live who were brought to God in those times of gracious power. They are fathers in Israel now, cherishing a grateful recollection of the revivals in the early days of Methodism in Virginia, and a joyful anticipation of a not distant, but glorious reunion with those with whom, in the days of their youth, they "took sweet counsel, and went to the house of God in company."

These blessed revivals were excellent nurseries for "babes in Christ." Amidst scenes of such deep and hallowing interest, the piety of Mr. Lee was cradled, and his religious principles were formed and matured. "During these seasons," he says, "my soul was greatly blessed, and for the greater part of my time I was 'strong in faith, giving glory to God.' I had such confidence in, and love to God and his service, that I was willing to be any-

thing or nothing, so that God might be all in all." Submission to God, a willingness to be

"Little and unknown,  
Loved and prized by God alone,"

as it is the happiest state of the mind, so it is the strongest and most consoling indication of the increase and triumph of grace in the soul of man. Humility is a priceless gem. Happy he in whose heart it reigns,—over whose moral nature it sheds the savour of its sanctifying and heaven-honoured influences. The fruits of the Spirit were developing themselves in the heart and life of this young disciple of Christ; and he was daily becoming stronger in faith, and more diligent in the various duties of his calling. "The Spirit itself bore witness with his spirit that he was a child of God." His heart was enlarged, and he rejoiced in the constant experience of "the power of godliness." Still he was not satisfied. He was graciously permitted to drink of the stream of love, but he desired to bathe in the fountain,—to be cleansed from all unrighteousness. Even this manifestation of the riches of grace was mercifully granted unto him. At a Quarterly Meeting held at Boisseau's Chapel, Dinwiddie county, in the spring of 1776, there was a most powerful outpouring of the Spirit. Many were "born of the Spirit," and brought into favour with God. The people of God were greatly blessed, and several professed to experience a deeper work of grace—*even the sanctification of their souls*. Here were witnesses of the truth that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." He could not question the work wrought in them; he could not doubt its freeness for him. He saw the excellency of the blessing; he felt its necessity. The following extract from his Journal shows the nature of his feelings, the purposes he formed, and the happiness he enjoyed even while seeking a blessing he so soon and so richly experienced. He says: "I went home with a fixed determination to seek for a deeper work of grace, and to hope, and pray, and wait for that perfect love which casteth out all fear. I did firmly believe that the Lord was both able and willing, to save to the uttermost all that would come to him. I felt a *sweet distress* in my soul for holiness of heart and life. I sensibly felt

that while I was seeking for purity of heart, I grew in grace, and in the knowledge of God. This concern of soul lasted for some time, till at length I could say, 'I have nothing but the love of Christ in my heart.' I was assured that my soul was continually happy in God. The world, with all its charms, *is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world.*" God is love. There is richness and beauty in this declaration of the Apostle, even to the unthankful and the unholy. It is full of meaning to the *minds* of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. But to the *heart* cleansed from sin, and possessed of perfect love, it has a significancy that is truly "unspeakable and full of glory." So Mr. Lee found it to be. He had the witness in himself. The love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost—even perfect love—casting out all fear, and filling his soul with peace and joy.

This happy change was wrought in the heart of Mr. Lee, while he was yet young in years and religion. He belonged to the class—*young men*—to whom the beloved disciple wrote that they should "love not the world, neither the things of the world," by obedience to which injunction, he assured them they should "overcome the wicked one, and abide for ever," happy and safe in the grace and love of God. He was in the eighteenth year of his age, and the fourth of his religious profession, when he found this "pearl of great price." His habits of studying the Bible, his unreserved and frequent intercourse with ministers, the hallowed influences of family religion, and his own faithfulness in the service of God; all united to prevent deception, and prepared him duly to weigh, and rightly to understand the way of the Spirit, and the work of God in his own soul. He was prepared therefore, to distinguish between being "*born* of the Spirit," a babe in Christ, and being "*filled with the Spirit*," sanctified wholly, and made a temple for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Hence he regarded it as a distinct work of grace wrought in his heart by the Spirit of God. It was not an enlargement of the work of regeneration, but the completion of it. *That* brought pardon and peace to his soul; *this* cleansed him from all unrighteousness, and filled him with perfect love. It was a crucifixion of all that was worldly and sinful in

his heart ; and a resurrection of his soul to the life and blessedness of righteousness and true holiness.

To any familiar with the workings of the Spirit, it can be no matter of surprise to find one thus brought into the enjoyment of full Christian liberty, anxious to promote a work that was so fraught with blessings to himself. As a moral being, enlightened by religious truth, he felt the importance of exhibiting an example of Christian excellence to his associates ; and as a Christian he acknowledged the obligation of doing all the good, of every kind, in his power. Beyond this he was animated by a strong "*desire* to do all the good he could." Hence, during the gracious revivals that occurred in the circuit for several successive years, he was diligently employed in measures to enlarge their influence, and increase their success. He sought opportunities of conversing with his acquaintance upon the subject of personal religion, and of impressing them with the importance of escaping "the wrath to come," by a hearty repentance, and true faith in Christ. Or, during his attendance on the frequent and protracted meetings of the times, he sought the mourners in Zion, and opened to them the way of salvation. As meetings were frequently held in the absence of the ministers, he would sometimes deliver a public exhortation, although his youth and diffidence made him reluctant to appear in public as a speaker. In a Manuscript Journal of his, now in my possession, the following entry occurs : " March 8th, 1778. I gave my first exhortation at Benjamin Doles'." It is probable he considered this his first regular, authorized exhortation ; not willing to think the brief and imperfect remarks he might have made during the revivals in his father's neighbourhood as worthy of being dignified with such a name. He was now in North Carolina, having left his native state in the latter part of the preceding year, to superintend the temporal affairs of a near relation whose husband had recently died.

Previous to the time to which we have brought the personal history of Mr. Lee, the Rev. Robert Williams, the pioneer of Methodism in Virginia, had departed this life. A brief record of his life is due to the memory of this excellent man, and it forms a bright page of the history of the times in which he lived. Mr. Williams was an Englishman, and was an authorized local preacher



in connexion with Mr. Wesley. How long he had been engaged in preaching previous to his embarkation for America, we have no information to guide us in determining. His emigration to this country as a Wesleyan preacher, was with the permission, rather than under the commission of Mr. Wesley; yet he was authorized to preach under the direction of the regular missionaries. His visit was induced, partly by temporal business, but chiefly by a desire, which he seems to have cherished for some time previously, to preach the gospel in America. In a conversation with a friend in Ireland, Mr. Ashton, who at the time was contemplating a removal, Mr. Williams gave him his word to accompany him, if he came to settle permanently in the country. Some time afterward he learned that "Mr. Ashton had embarked for America, and, according to his promise, he hurried down to the town near to which the ship lay, sold his horse to pay his debts, and taking his saddlebags on his arm, set off to the ship, with a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk, *and no money to pay his passage*. For that, however, he trusted to his friend, and his confidence was not misplaced. He arrived in the city of New York, in October 1769, and preached in Wesley Chapel previous to the arrival of Messrs. Boardman and Pillmore in that city. After preaching awhile for the church in New York, he visited Mr. Pillmore in Philadelphia, by whom he was examined and granted a general license to preach. From Philadelphia he visited Mr. Strawbridge in Maryland; and with him and the Rev. John King, recently arrived from London, "began a good work in Baltimore county, and some other parts of the state." In 1771, the latter part of the year, he was engaged in a missionary tour upon the Eastern Shore of Maryland; and in the beginning of 1772, he made his first visit to Virginia. At the first Conference ever held in America, in Philadelphia, June 1773, he was admitted into the travelling connexion, and sent to labour in Virginia. Of his success in planting Methodism in Virginia we have given an account. Mr. Williams entered into the holy estate of matrimony, it is presumable, some time in 1774; and, according to the phraseology of the times, "*desisted* from travelling." He was probably the first Methodist minister in America that married, the first that located, and the first that died. After his location, he resided on the public road between Norfolk and Suffolk, in Virgi-

nia; and here he died, and was buried. His death occurred on the 26th of September, 1775. Mr. Asbury, who was at the time preaching in Norfolk and Portsmouth, under the same date makes the following characteristic remark in his journal: "Brother W. died. The Lord does all things well: perhaps Brother W. was in danger of being entangled in worldly business, and might thereby have injured the cause of God. So he was taken away from the evil to come." A recollection of Mr. Asbury's peculiar notions of matrimony among ministers, and of his strong opposition to their locating, will serve to show that the extract respecting Mr. Williams is but the expression of a holy regard for the work of God, and not the language of distrust, with regard to the upright life and safe termination of the course of his departed brother. After the settlement of Mr. Williams, his house became a home for his brethren, and a regular place for preaching. A few weeks before his death, Mr. Asbury had preached there on two occasions during his regular excursions to the country.\* No stone marks the spot where this faithful and holy man moulders in silent dust; and no records describe with what feelings he met his last enemy, or what shout of triumph he raised at the portals of death's gloomy domain. It is enough, however, to know how he lived. Mr. Jarratt† speaks of him as "a plain, simple-hearted, pious man;" and adds, "this was his general character." Of his preaching, in addition to what has been previously said, Mr. Jarratt bears this testimony: "I liked his preaching, in the main, very well, and especially the affectionate and animated manner in which his discourses were delivered." No wonder that he should say, "I felt much attachment to Mr. Williams." Mr. Lee‡ also, in recording the death of a man so worthy of being had in remembrance, says: "Although he is dead, he yet speaketh to many of his spiritual children, while they remember his *faithful preaching* and his *holy walk*."

It is an interesting fact in the personal history of Mr. Williams, that he was the first American Methodist that employed the press as an auxiliary to the spread of holiness. Some time previous to

\* Asbury's Journal, vol. i. pp. 118, 119.

† Life, pp. 107, 108.

‡ Hist. of the Methodists, p. 53.

the first Conference, he had "reprinted many of Mr. Wesley's books, and had spread them through the country, to the great advantage of religion." The sermons of Mr. Wesley are particularly spoken of as having achieved great good in explaining the doctrine of regeneration and the way of salvation. Withal, they were pioneers for the preachers, and procured them invitations to preach in places where they were previously unknown. At the Conference in Philadelphia, June 1773, the practice was interdicted, and the following rule adopted, which, with some modifications, remains to the present time. "No preacher shall be permitted to reprint our books, without the approbation of Mr. Wesley, and the consent of his brethren." By a special enactment it was settled "that R. Williams shall be allowed to sell what he has, but to reprint no more." This shows that the rule had a particular application, and that the practice of Mr. Williams was the cause of its adoption. One object of this regulation was the desire to make the publication of books, and the profits arising from the sale of them, a denominational concern. To this small beginning the present "Book Concern," with its numerous auxiliaries, and countless benefits, may be directly traced.

It is not to be supposed that Mr. Williams met with no opposition in his holy work of preaching the gospel in Virginia. In some parts of the state immense multitudes attended his ministry. This excited the hostility of "unreasonable and wicked men." These "evil-minded persons opposed the act of toleration, and threatened to imprison him." If Mr. Jarratt had been threatened with punishment for the breach of canonical order, in preaching in unconsecrated places, it can afford no ground for surprise to find Mr. Williams opposed, and the gloomy cells of a prison held up to deter him from doing his master's work. But he was "in nothing terrified by his adversaries;" and he held fast the form of sound words, and maintained his integrity until he was gathered to "the general assembly and Church of the first-born in heaven."

The removal of Mr. Lee from his father's house was, on many grounds, beneficial to him. This important event in his life took place in the latter part of the year 1777. The temporal welfare of a widowed relation, was the ostensible cause of his separation

from scenes and associations sacred in their nature, and hallowing in their recollections. But there was a higher agent than the impulses of his own benevolence moving his heart. God was thrusting him out from his home and early ties and occupations, and leading him, through a wider field of usefulness, into the more extended labours and responsibilities of the ministry. Circumstances are not wanting to show that the impression of a probable future entrance into this work had been made upon his mind. The maturity of his Christian experience, the zeal that so eminently distinguished him, his burning anxiety to do good, and his readiness to every good word and work, together with his diligence in the improvement of his mind by the reading of good books, and the study of the Bible, all indicate that the Spirit was preparing his heart, and Providence pointing his way to the holy employments of the ministry. These views are sustained by his own subsequent and more mature judgment of the subject. "I have often admired," he says, "the providence of God in opening the way for me to remove to North Carolina; for had I continued among my relations in Virginia, I might not have begun my public labours so soon: for at that time of my life I was very timid. But when I removed among strangers, I lost, in some degree, my former fearfulness." It is true this separation from home and friends was painful. It was his first adventure in the world; and he knew too well "what is in man" not to distrust his own heart. But he was assured of the rectitude of his motives, and knew in whom he had believed. He therefore feared nothing, but trusted that in this, as in all things else, Christ would "do all things well."

It is too often the case that a change of residence, though not really calculated to do so, operates to produce an entire alteration in the feelings and habits of Christians. The absence of old associations, and the presence of new and strange scenes and engagements, occupy so much of the time and attention, that religious principles are forgotten, and pious duties neglected, or only partially observed. In new situations, circumstances are not always favourable to the cultivation of devotional feelings. And sometimes they are gladly embraced, as affording a good opportunity to throw off the restraints of a profession whose spirit has been lost, and

whose duties have become irksome. But a Christian, "rooted and grounded in love," will recognise the power of religious principle in every condition of life; and find means of usefulness under all circumstances, however unpromising. In the void waste, as in the thronged city, God will be present to his faith and his fears; and he can never be at a loss for employment while sin remains in his heart, or vain thoughts find a lodgment in his mind. If he is deprived of Christian society, he will endeavour to create it out of the materials around him; and if his efforts fail, he will still have a well-spring of comfort in fellowship with God, and communion with his own heart. . At the time of which we are writing, Christian society was not as common as it is now; still Mr. Lee did not remove beyond the range of its influence. He was still within the limits of the then small, but ever enlarging, circle of Methodism. His first step, as it was his first duty, was to identify himself with the people of God. He "united with the class" in the neighbourhood, as soon as he was settled in his new residence. By thus seeking a means of grace, which Methodists have always regarded as the best prudential regulation known to the Churches of Christ, and fondness for which they consider an indication of a healthy spiritual state, he gave a gratifying evidence of the fixedness of his religious principles, and of his sincere desire to dwell in the courts of the Lord's house, to enjoy its shelter, and partake of its blessings. He was too familiar with the exercises of the class-room, their revivifying influence upon the religious affections, and their hallowing impressions upon the moral nature, to lightly esteem, or wilfully neglect them. It is not surprising, to any accustomed to these meetings, that they should be so loved, or that so high an estimate should be placed upon their spiritual efficiency. They are truly strongholds of safety and defence to the young in Christ, and they form most excellent schools for practical and experimental theology. Nor is this all; they are nurseries for the ministry. The searching inquiries of a strong-minded and holy class-leader open the mind to the perception of spiritual truths, and lay the heart bare to the counsel of experience, and the control of conscience. They enlighten and influence the thinking faculty; and thus have the two-fold effect of awakening the mind and supplying it with material. The habit of speaking, too, so common to class-meetings,

is not to be left out in an estimate of their value. In this respect they have a most important agency in preparing young Christians for usefulness in the Church of Christ. Many who have become masters in Israel have here learned to speak of the wonderful works of God.

It is the policy of Methodism, and it is one cause of its abundant success, to give employment to all the talents to be found in its ranks. It has work for all, and all are expected to work. In accordance with this feature of our ecclesiastical economy, we find Mr. Lee, at this early period of his life, and not through his own seeking, entering upon a higher sphere of duty. He was now residing in the Roanoke circuit, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Wm. Glendenning. In the early part of the year 1778, he was appointed class-leader by the minister in charge of the circuit. Having given himself up to the service of God, and his Church, he did not feel himself at liberty to refuse this appointment. As he had a true and lively zeal for the cause of Christ, he felt constrained to regard it as a call from God, and to embrace it as a means of doing good. Yet it was with no vain self-confidence that he entered upon the duties of his new vocation. He says: "I felt it to be a heavy cross, yet I dared not refuse. I began with fear and trembling, and often wished to be excused. I loved the cause of God, and was willing to do all I could; but being young, not quite twenty years of age, I was sensible of my danger, and of my own weakness. When I met the class, I frequently wept much while I was talking to the people about the welfare of their souls." Humbleness of mind, especially when united with a vigorous performance of duty, is a sure indication of a special designation of the Holy Ghost. But the class-room was too limited a field for his enlarged desires to do good. He struck out a new path, and entered upon a larger sphere of usefulness. He commenced holding prayer-meetings in his own neighbourhood, and also in the societies adjacent to him. His great aim in these meetings, was to promote the work of God among the people, by, in his own simple heartfelt language, "*begging* them to be reconciled to God." In these humble efforts much of his time was occupied; and, if in no other way, he found in his own soul the fulfilment of the remark, "in all labour there is profit." "I seldom gave an exhortation," he

says, "without weeping, *for my heart yearned over the souls of poor sinners.* At that time, I could truly say, 'the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.'" In all this time he had formed no definite plan with respect to the pursuits of life; he had no settled purpose of devoting himself to the work of the ministry. He "only wished to exhort and pray, and live to do good to the souls of the people."

But God had prescribed the way in which his young servant was to glorify Him, and he was gradually working in him a meetness for the holy employments to which his future life was to be devoted. He was not disobedient to the heavenly calling; and hence, in the presence of the multitude, or in the solitude of the closet, he enjoyed a sweet and satisfying sense of the presence and favour of God. His "chief wish and greatest concern was to know the will of God, and do it in all things, both great and small."

Filial affection filled a large place in the heart of Mr. Lee. He went out from his father's house under the persuasion that it was the will of God; yet he did not regard it as releasing him from the obligation of honouring his parents, or of yielding to them all the evidences of filial reverence and respect. In the earlier and more mature periods of his life, he regarded the law of submission to his parents as only a little less commanding than the law of obedience to God. To both he rendered implicit and uncomplaining submission. He sought annually to visit his parents, to please and comfort them, and to satisfy his own sense of duty; and doubtless, also, to renew the impressions of his first love, and to reinvigorate his soul by Christian communion with those amongst whom he had first experienced the power of godliness. Nor was he unemployed during these visits. In all places, and under all circumstances, his heart was fixed. The first visit to the home of his childhood, as it exhibits his religious feelings, and the custom of his father's house to improve all occasions into means of usefulness, we will give in his own words:

"In the close of the year I went to visit my friends in Virginia, and was at meeting with them in different places, and exhorted them publicly, and with much earnestness, to flee the wrath to come, and prepare for a better world. I was much pleased to

find many of my old friends steadily pursuing their journey to heaven.

"On Christmas day we had a precious love-feast at my father's, where the Christians were highly favoured of the Lord, and greatly comforted together in hearing each other tell of the goodness of God to their souls."

Happy is that family whose God is the Lord,—whose bonds are forged in heaven, and whose intercourse is the relaxation of the higher and holier affinities of the temple service of Jehovah!

It is not to be thought that Mr. Lee was exclusively occupied with religious meetings. These were his meat and drink, and they were chief matters with him; but he had other objects to engage his attention. He had to superintend a farm, and often to "labour with his own hands." He often toiled all day, and held meeting at night. And yet he did not neglect the improvement of his mind. He availed himself of all the helps within reach, and adopted such plans of gaining and preserving information as seemed most conducive to so desirable an object. Much of his time was given to this matter. He read with carefulness such books, as, in those days of scarcity, he could procure. He also adopted the plan of noting down the sermons he heard preached, the name of the preacher, the text, and the general divisions of the subject. It was in January 1778 he commenced this plan, and he continued it to the close of his life. It formed no part of his original purpose to keep a journal, or to write an account of his own religious exercises; yet it ere long received such a modification, and in the course of his ministerial career his text-book was swelled into nearly, or quite three thousand pages of manuscript. In these "journals he duly registered the name of every author he read, with the number of pages the book contained. He also kept an exact account of every quarterly meeting he attended, together with the number of love-feasts at which he was present. General and Annual Conferences were regularly noticed, with the time, place, and every remarkable circumstance attending them."\* These facts serve to show his close attention to what was passing around him, as well as his great anxiety

\* Rev. M. Thrift.



to increase his stock of knowledge. His own experience is the best illustration of the usefulness of his plans. "This plan," he says, "of noting down the sermons I heard, was of great service to me. It fixed useful things in my memory, and gave me a view of the method and manner of preaching, and brought me to a much better judgment of the nature and substance of the doctrines to be raised from certain texts. *All these things being put together, my mind was led thereby to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the meritorious cause of all the blessings I enjoyed.* The benefit which I have derived to my own soul from the above plan, causes me still to feel thankful that he ever directed and guided me in that way. For in these things I took no man for my pattern, and no man's plan for my guide." Christ was all, and in all, to Mr. Lee. He was not only recognised as controlling the pursuits and governing the events of life, but all life's objects and employments led to and terminated in Christ. He was right. Christ should occupy the uppermost seat in the heart.

The books he read in pursuance of his plans of improvement, form a part of Mr. Lee's personal history during the period now passing under review. The list for 1778 is lost. That for 1779, when, as yet, no material change in his business habits had taken place, will show his fondness for reading, and the nature of the subjects that engaged his attention. Among these works we find an enumeration of tracts of ten pages and upwards to volumes of eight hundred pages. Some are doctrinal and controversial, others treat of personal religion, and of the Christian experience of God's people. All are strictly moral and religious. Among them may be noticed, *The Character of a Methodist, Scripture Doctrines, Predestinarian and his Friend, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Wesley's Appeal, Dissenting Gentleman, Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Whitefield's Journal, Brainerd's Journal.* The New Testament is named as having been read *twice*. In all, his reading for the year amounted to 2984 pages. His selection, considering the times, was a judicious one, and the quantity of his reading, under the circumstances of his situation, is very creditable, and evinces great industry and perseverance. Many with very superior advantages accomplish far less than he did.

Early in 1779 Mr. Lee returned to North Carolina, and re-en-

tered into business. He does not state in what particular-business he engaged, but the choice he made, whether of a partner, or an employer, shows how entirely he made religion the grand master-principle of his feelings and pursuits. His own language upon this topic needs no interpreter :

"In the beginning of 1779, I engaged in business with G—— L——, with whom I expected to find much comfort in the course of the year, as he was, in my esteem, one of the best private Christians that I was acquainted with. It turned out according to my expectations, and my soul was greatly blessed, quickened, and comforted during that year, and the man with whom I lived acted towards me as a father, and a brother, and gave me much information and encouragement in religious matters. I spent all the time I could spare from my common vocation, in reading or in going to meeting." The ordinary engagements of life were made to subserve his supreme purpose of knowing, loving, and obeying God. He made them "instruments of righteousness unto holiness."

It was during this year he was brought to that position with respect to the Church of God, which so many circumstances had seemed to point out as the proper calling of his life, and which he subsequently filled with so much happiness to himself, and so much usefulness to others. Of the peculiar workings of his mind under the strivings of the Spirit, that preceded his first attempt to preach, he has left no record. Before he thus appeared in the pulpit, and when he was most actively employed in conducting prayer-meetings, he says, "during these exercises I had very little thought of becoming a preacher." And after he commenced he had "no expectation of ever travelling and preaching extensively in the work." His sole purpose, as it was his supreme desire, was to please God, and do good. God prescribed the way, and chose the field in which these ends were to be accomplished. That way was the itinerancy ; the field was white and inviting on every hand. Yet he dreaded to enter it. Of his first sermon he thus writes :

"On the 17th of November, 1779, I preached for the first time in my life, at a place called the Old Barn. My text was 1st John iii. 1, 2. I felt more liberty in speaking from the text than I expected to feel when I began. I felt such a desire to please God,

and to instruct the people how to serve Him, that I was at that time willing to spend my days in the service of God."

Within a few weeks he preached several times, and felt that God was with him. In his public ministrations, he found the fulfilment of the gracious promise, "I will be mouth and wisdom unto thee"—and he was comforted and encouraged. Yet he says: "I was so sensible of my own weakness and insufficiency, that after I had preached, I would retire to the woods and prostrate myself on the ground, and weep before the Lord; and pray that he would pardon the imperfections of my preaching, and give me strength to declare His whole counsel in purity." So tender was conscience, so imperious the sense of duty that impelled him forward in a way he would scarcely have chosen if uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit. But there was to be, thenceforward, no pause in his career. His hand was on the plough; the way of duty, life, salvation, was before him; the furrow must not be made crooked by looking back. It was not long before he compassed a wider field.

The Rev. John Dickens, at that time the preacher in charge of Roanoke circuit, anxious for the leisure of a few weeks, to finish some writings in which he was engaged, obtained the consent of Mr. Lee to take his place on the circuit, and supply for a short time his lack of service. With a trembling heart he consented. The cross was heavy at the commencement, and it had lost but little of its weight when the term for which he was engaged expired. But it was another step in the upward path of Providence; and it had the good effect to familiarize him with the duties of the ministry, and fit him for the yet remote, but more effective work of the itinerancy. His zeal did not abate when he returned to his customary routine of neighbourhood appointments. Nor was he left without evidence that his labours were made a blessing to others. It appeared to him, however, that he was better qualified to guide and comfort the trained bands of the Lord, than to collect and discipline those whose hearts were not yet freed from the dominion of the strong man.

What constitutes a *divine call* to the office and work of the ministry in the Church of Christ? This is a question of no small importance. All the Reformed Churches of Christendom recognise the principle that the designation of the Holy Ghost is essentially

prerequisite to the act of the Church in conferring authority to exercise the functions of the ministry. But they are not agreed as to what constitutes this designation. Two opinions seem to divide the Christian world on this subject. One class of religionists consider the *outward* act of ordination as the source of ministerial authority. The other regard the *inward* moving of the Holy Ghost as presenting the only scriptural claim to the rights and powers of the office. These last consider the act of ordination as only a Church recognition of the previous call of God. The former of these opinions does not necessarily involve the doctrine that the personal holiness of the candidate is essential to the work of the ministry. The latter makes it an indispensable condition of admission to the office. The one takes the power of appointing ministers out of the hand of Christ : the other confines it exclusively there. Such are the main points of difference between these opinions. There are, also, shades of difference, as to what constitutes the inward call of God, or as to the evidences of such a call, between those who, from a general agreement, take rank on the same side of the subject. It is not our purpose, nor is it needed, to discuss the relative merit of these opinions. The Methodist Episcopal Church has, from the beginning, regarded the subject of the call, appointment, and qualification of ministers as belonging exclusively to Christ. He is the sole and supreme Head of the Church, ministers are his *ambassadors*, and he reserves to himself the right to select and send them. All that the Church can do in the matter is to examine and compare the claims of the candidate with the scriptural characteristics of a Divine call. If these correspond with each other, she is bound to receive him as a commissioned minister of Christ. Personal holiness is the first subject of her inquiries. Christ will never send a wolf to take the charge and oversight of his sheep : A wicked man has no place to cultivate in the Lord's vineyard. These are fundamental verities. They form the rule of her judgment in measuring the claims of those " who profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost to preach." A mere profession of religion will not suffice to prove such a claim ; it will not satisfy her demands. " Do they know God as a pardoning God ? Have they the love of God abiding in them ? Do they desire nothing but God ? And are they holy in all manner of conversa-

tion?" These are the questions by which she seeks to probe the very "thoughts and intents of the heart." He must be deeply skilled in hypocrisy who can deceive her. But her inquiries stop not here. As Christ would not call a wolf to protect his fold, so neither will he call a blind man to guide his flock, nor a dumb man to warn his people. There have been dumb dogs that could not bark in the house of God, but they were not placed there by Christ. The chosen of Christ to do the work of the ministry must have "*gifts*, as well as *grace* for the work." They must have, "in some tolerable degree, a clear, sound understanding, a right judgment in the things of God, a just conception of salvation by faith. Has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?" These points are to be settled. It is not enough that they can *write*, they must be able to *speak*, not bunglingly, but *justly, READILY, CLEARLY*. The command is, "*Go speak* unto them all the words of this life." Nor will this satisfy the Church. Christ chose and ordained the Apostles that they might go and bring forth *fruit*; and *seals* to their ministry—the begetting of children to God by the preaching of the gospel—was considered by the Apostles as the only indisputable evidence of their Apostleship. These demonstrated the holiness of their character, the divinity of their authority. The rule is changeless. By the same mark are we now to judge whether men be called of God. They must have *fruit*. Sinners must be truly convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching. Otherwise they have started without a message; they have run, but Christ did not send them. There must be a concurrence of all these marks to authenticate the claim of every one professing to be called of God to preach the gospel of Christ.

It is an enlargement of these principles, rather than an addition to them, to consider their influence upon the personal character of those who are truly called of God to the office and work of the ministry in the Church of Christ. It is only from those who have experienced the power of saving faith, that Christ selects those whose office is a representation of the spiritual character of his gospel. Consistently with the principles and purposes of Christianity, an unconverted man cannot be called to the ministry; his character would contradict his pretensions, and contravene his measures. It

would be committing the interests of his kingdom to the enemies of his throne. All therefore who would settle the question of their own call to the ministry, must first decide whether they are children of God by faith in Christ. It is also obvious that those thus wrought upon by the Holy Spirit will possess, at least in an ordinary degree, the fruits of the Spirit. The very doubt that may perplex their minds, will contribute its measure of influence to work out a just conclusion, especially when, as its effect, it impels the soul to seek in communion with God, a settlement of the matter. A *Christian*, for of such only we write, whose mind may be exercised upon this matter, may suppose himself inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, when he finds the following marks in his personal experience.

1. *When the work of the ministry as a matter of personal duty, forces itself upon his reflections.* It is the way of the Spirit, when calling to a special office or duty in the Church, to bring the nature, responsibilities, and employments of the office frequently before the mind. Sometimes the mind discusses its obligations; at others, it performs its duties. Again, it braves its dangers, rejoices in its toils, assumes its feelings, and anticipates its successes; or it struggles with its commandments, and shrinks from its authority. It fills the thoughts, clothing them with images drawn from the character and aspects of the subject. When reading his Bible, while sitting in the house of God, in the solitude of the chamber, or in the thronged mart; awake or asleep, resting or at work, the ministry, in some of its features, will flit over his mind like a vision, or occupy his thoughts like a grand master impulse. Thoughts of it will come unbidden, and under circumstances unfriendly to such considerations.

2. *When amid such perplexities the soul is calmly waiting upon God.* The mightiest energies of the mind, under the agency of the Spirit, do not lessen confidence in God, or operate against a progressive religious improvement. In the very tumult of the thoughts, the deep fountains of the heart may be undisturbed. There grace may reign. The work of the Spirit, in separating a man from even the holy things of ordinary Christian life, and placing him on a high place in a holy work, does not interfere with his Christian enjoyments. It quickens and refines them. He will "grow in grace," even while seeking to know what is *signified* by the Spirit of Christ

working in him. If that be darkness, he will still have light in the Lord, the fellowship of Christ, the comfort of the Holy Ghost—happy in God, whether He command to go forward or to stand still.

3. *When, even though satisfied of duty, there is a self-distrust for the work.* No man “is sufficient for these things.” “Our sufficiency is of God.” It is God that worketh *in* us; without him we can do nothing. A sense of ability for such a calling is a demonstration of unfitness. He is uncalled of God who feels himself worthy to go. He is unprepared for the work who thinks himself competent to undertake it. It was only through *grace given*, that Paul undertook to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Even then he confessed himself “*less than the least of all saints.*” God is the wise master builder; man is but a workman. If the kingdom of heaven is a vineyard, man is only a tiller of the soil; he may plant and water, the increase cometh of God. The truly called are only strong in the work of God, when they are weak in themselves.

4. *When, in yielding themselves to the call of God, they feel actuated by the constraining love of Christ, rather than by any desire of personal benefit.* Selfishness is poison in the cup of piety. It is a deadly evil in the heart of a minister. A soul wrought on by the Spirit to engage in the ministry, loses sight of self, and is filled with feelings and visions of the glory that is to accrue to Christ, and the good to be done to the souls of sinners by faithfulness in the work of preaching. Self will be overwhelmed by the consciousness of insufficiency. Christ will be the impelling power leading to the work, and sustaining, and giving success in it. “I believe, therefore have I spoken,” will be the answer of conscience. In all the perplexities of the case there will be meekness and quietness of spirit; and its settlement, by a surrender of self—soul, body and spirit, talents, influence and life—to the service and glory of Christ, will inspire the soul with the self-sustaining consciousness of integrity. Submission to Christ is the triumph of the soul.

If by these principles we judge of the claims of Mr. Lee to have received a call from God, to “the office and work of a minister in the Church of Christ,” there will be no room to doubt that it was his duty to give his faithful diligence “to serve God, for the pro-

moting of his glory, and the edifying of his people." The toils and self-sacrifice of his subsequent life, will at least serve to show the strength and impressiveness of his own convictions. A refusal to credit them would involve a denial of the doctrine of Spiritual influence.

The year was drawing to a close. His filial feelings again sought a gratification at the fireside of his childhood's happy home. In social intercourse he spent all the time that could be spared from religious duties. Even while yielding to the demands of natural affection, he was not unmindful of the heavenly calling. His affections were fixed on things above. It is not surprising, then, that he "felt more pleasure in religious meetings than in visiting his relations." The authority of God is higher and holier than that of a parent. Submission to both is imperative; and, happily for man, they are not incompatible with each other.

A remark respecting the weather, during this visit to Virginia, may not be out of place. It is copied from his manuscripts. "This was supposed to be the coldest winter that had ever been known in Virginia. It has been properly called the cold winter of 1779-80."

Methodism, during the period embraced in this portion of Mr. Lee's personal history, had been gradually enlarging its borders, and multiplying its numbers. In 1773, it numbered in its fold 1160 souls, scattered through five states, embraced in six circuits, under the pastoral care of ten ministers, and within the jurisdiction of one Conference. In 1779 there were two Conferences; one held in Kent county, Delaware, on the 28th of April, the other in Fluvanna county, Virginia, on the 18th of May. In the first of these Conferences there were seven circuits, some of them including whole states, with seventeen ministers. In the other, there were twelve circuits and twenty-five ministers. In all, forty-two ministers and 8577 members. Nearly one-half of the members then in society were in Virginia. It was here the largest labour was employed, and here the greatest product was gathered. A most powerful impression was made on the public mind in Virginia by the preaching of the first ministers that came into the state. Revivals were more powerful, wider spread, and longer continued here, than in any other portions of the work. A majority of the ministers laboured



in the state, and more than half the circuits have Virginia names. As a general thing, the ministers found a people prepared of the Lord. Opposition to their ministry, though decided, was not general; and where it appeared, it was partial in its influence, and short-lived in its effects. The word of God was quick and powerful. It was preached by mighty men—men of God, full of faith and the Holy Ghost: men suited to the times, simple of heart, self-denying of life, with a fervent spirit and a quenchless zeal. What could withstand them? Sin? They sought it in its strongholds, and it submitted to the preaching of Christ and him crucified. The Church was here, and it had been here from the foundation of the colony. But the abomination that maketh desolate—wicked men—ministered at her altars, and stood in her pulpits. The time for regeneration was come. Henceforth a sounder doctrine, and a more simple and spiritual worship, was to mark the religious history of the state. The leaven of a pure faith was deposited in the heart of Virginia. Its plans were vast, its spirit indomitable. It was young, powerful, successful, humble. Its morning was brilliant. Years have passed, it is triumphantly ascending its zenith. May its sunset be glorious!

## CHAPTER III.

FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MINISTRY IN 1779, TO HIS ENTRANCE INTO THE TRAVELLING CONNEXION IN 1783.

War of the Revolution—English Preachers—Public Distrust of them—Return of several to England—Maltreatment of Messrs. Hartley and Garrettson—Silence of Mr. Asbury—Effects of these things upon the Societies—Without Pastors and Ordinances—Controversy respecting Ordinances—General view of the Question—Origin of the Question in 1777—Postponed in Conference of 1778—Conference at Broken Back Church in 1779—Full account of the Proceedings of this Conference—Ordination of Ministers—Grounds of its justification—Protest of the Conference in Baltimore—Send a Deputation to Virginia—Mannakin Town Conference—Difficulties—Adjustment—Happy Effects—Mr. Lee in a new Sphere—Drafted into the Army—Refuses to bear Arms, and is Imprisoned—Anecdote—Family Prayer in the Guard-house—Morning Worship—Released and Promoted—Preaches on the Sabbath—Execution of a Tory—Retreat—Anecdote—Profanity—Efforts to do Good among the Soldiers—Released from the Army—Returns Home—Industry in Preaching—Itinerancy—Dread of entering it—Difficulties and Encouragements—War Spirit in Virginia—Disastrous Effects on Religion—Conference in Virginia—Declines joining—Travels awhile—Assists in forming a new Circuit—Enlargement of Methodism.

**CHRISTIANITY**—the religion of peace and of love—is unfriendly to war, and cannot prosper in the midst of its confusion and bloodshed. The war with England, consequent upon the Declaration of Independence, was spreading its desolations over some of the fairest fields of Methodism. It was an unfortunate circumstance for the infant Church, then struggling into being, and beset on every hand with difficulties, that its chief ministers were Englishmen; all of them averse to the war, some of them decidedly hostile to the American cause, and many of them anxious to leave a country with whose struggles for freedom they felt no sympathy, and for whose success they could not pray without disloyalty. In this state of things, it is not surprising that the imprudence of one man should subject the whole to suspicion, and

bring upon the Church of Christ, of which they were the authorized ministers, the reproach of infidelity to the country. Distrust, hostility, and persecution, were natural results of the general exasperation produced by the discovery of the anti-revolutionary affinities of the prominent and most influential ministers of Methodism. Occasion was not long wanting for the developement of that spirit of evil and resentment which lives in the heart of the unregenerate, and which, in such times of excitement and alarm, is especially clamorous for gratification. Soon after the commencement of hostilities between the two countries, Messrs. Rankin and Shadford evinced great anxiety to return to their native land; and, after carefully weighing the matter in all its bearings, they resolved to carry their purpose into effect. Their object presented many difficulties, and was encumbered with many dangers; but they succeeded, and reached England in safety. A short time, however, previous to their embarkation, Mr. Rodda, one of their companions, and who was to accompany them, gave great offence to the American party by some imprudence of conduct with respect to the tories, either by associating with them or by stimulating and encouraging their hostility to the cause of republicanism. By this act, the public distrust of the English preachers was greatly strengthened. New suspicions were awakened, and persecution stretched out its bloody hand to vex and punish "certain of the Church." The weight of this persecution fell most heavily upon those who were employed in Delaware and Maryland. In the latter state, Messrs. Hartley and Garrettson were subjected, the one to imprisonment, and the other to severe personal maltreatment. Mr. Hartley, while engaged in his circuit labours, in Queen Anne county, was arrested and held to bail for his appearance at some subsequent court for the county; and, in the mean time, was prohibited, under forfeiture of his bond, from preaching within its jurisdiction. He nevertheless attended his appointments, conceiving it no violation of his bond to conduct religious worship; "and, after singing and prayer, he would stand on his knees and exhort the people." But, exhorting on his knees was as objectionable to his enemies as preaching on his feet; and they soon forced him to leave the county. Passing into Talbot county, he was again arrested and thrown into prison. But here his zeal did not

forsake him. He took his position at the window of the jail, and, through its iron grates, preached to listening crowds the freeness of the great salvation. The word was effectual through God; many were cut to the heart, and sought peace through Jesus Christ. So general was this religious interest, that some of the citizens, under fear of his converting the whole town, insisted upon his liberation. How long he was confined we know not; but Mr. Lee, from whose history these facts are taken, says: "After awhile he was turned out; but they had kept him too long, for religion began to revive, and, soon after, it prospered greatly in the place."

During the same year Mr. Garrettson was severely beaten by a man named Brown, for no other offence than that of "preaching that men should repent," and with no other authority than that of personal malignity. This brutal severity had well nigh cost Mr. Garrettson his life. He was beaten over the head with a stick, and finally thrown from his horse, and nearly killed. And might have died but for the kindness and care of a woman who found him "left for dead" in the road, bled him, and took care for him. But the spirit of his mission was not beaten out of him. He soon revived, sat up, and, as every one familiar with the quenchless zeal of the early Methodist ministry would readily suppose, exhorted all around to seek the mystery of that faith in Christ which, as in the case of his blessed Redeemer, enabled him to forget his own sufferings in his profound anxiety for the eternal welfare of others. Such was the indomitable zeal, the heavenly temper, of those who planted Methodism in the virgin soil of America.

To avoid similar, and perhaps worse treatment, as he was an Englishman, Mr. Asbury measurably suspended his ministerial labours, and spent nearly two years in comparative silence and retirement. From conscientious scruples, or from the nature of the oath of allegiance, he could not conform to the legal requirements of Maryland, and he sought refuge in Delaware. He found in the hospitable family of Mr. T. White, not only shelter and protection, but whatever of privacy and comfort his personal safety or spiritual interests required. His journals abound with notices of the kindness and consideration of this worthy family; and also of the greater attention he was thereby enabled to bestow upon his min-

isterial studies, and his growth in grace and holiness. In the latter part of the year 1779 he entered somewhat more largely into public life; and though watched and threatened, he was mercifully spared all other suffering than that of restraint in preaching the word of God.

Others shared in these persecutions. But the evils of this state of things fell chiefly upon the Church. The shepherds were smitten, and the sheep were scattered and destroyed. The societies, deprived of their regular services, declined in numbers and piety. But, painful and gloomy as were the prospects of the more northern portions of the Church, a darker cloud was gathering over the societies in Virginia and North Carolina, then forming the southern limits of Methodism. Hitherto it had endured and triumphed over the persecutions of those without; now it was to sustain the shock of dissensions within—brother striving with brother. In the early planting of Methodism in Virginia, it found a firm and useful friend and coadjutor in Mr. Jarratt; and for some time he travelled extensively to assist the preachers, and confirm the societies, by baptizing them and their children, and by administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But he could not keep pace with the itinerant, nor circulate to the annually increasing extremities of Methodism. There were other clergymen of the Established Church, but they were not of a character to claim the confidence of the truly pious; and were quite indifferent, if not positively averse, to the introduction of Methodism into their parishes. And if they had been willing to administer the sacraments to the infant societies, a large majority of the Methodists would have been unwilling to receive them at their hands. From these, therefore, nothing could be expected, as to the administration of the ordinances. And it was impracticable for Mr. Jarratt to meet the demand. As positive institutions of Christ, the Methodists not only greatly desired the sacraments, but felt it to be a Christian duty thus to obey Christ, and have communion with Him. It was clearly a question of duty, started by conscience, and, in the adjustment of which, conscience must be consulted and satisfied. In this state of the case they must either disobey Christ, or claim the sacraments at the hands of those through whose ministry the gospel had been made "the power of God unto salvation" to them. And this claim they pre-

sented and urged with a unanimity, perseverance, and importunity that felt its right to be heard, and furnishes a sufficient justification for those who, in that period of national gloom, gave heed to the claim set up by pious men confessing submission and seeking communion with Christ.

The divinely instituted ordinances are the heritage of Christians. And in whatever aspect we may consider the question as to the right or power to administer them, we cannot doubt the right of "them that believe," to use them; and this right, as to time, exists coincident with their spiritual regeneration. Nor, if the gospel is to be our guide in settling the question, can we doubt the validity of their administration by those even whose proof of ministerial authority rests upon personal holiness and success in winning souls to Christ. The claims usually set up for authority to administer the sacraments, that do not embrace these cardinal principles, will never possess much weight with truly regenerated persons, and will always lack the evidence of congruity with the doctrines, and identity with the spirit of the gospel. It will never be otherwise than difficult to persuade a pious mind that the sacraments are more valid from the hands of an ordained wicked man, than they are from those of an unordained good one. In a word, placing ourselves in the times of which we write, unless we would excommunicate Christ from his Highpriesthood in the church, and his Headship over it, we must maintain that the man of loose principles and worse habits, ordained by the Bishop of London and sent to Virginia as a minister, was, in every attribute of the office, whether of personal fitness or official authority, inferior to the ministers of Methodism in every essential qualification for the administration of Christian ordinances. But it was not merely the question of the superior spiritual qualifications of their own ministers over those of the Established Church, that the Methodists had to consider and settle. It was a matter of conscience between relinquishing their Christian birthright altogether, or of seeking communion with Christ in ordinances administered by men of selfish feelings and vicious life. This matter they had pressed upon their pastors from the commencement of Methodism in the colonies; but they were coldly refused or severely rebuked.

At the first Conference held in America,\* it was "agreed to by

\* June 1773, in Philadelphia. See Minutes.

all the preachers present," as one of the "rules" for their government, that "all the people among whom we labour (are) to be earnestly exhorted to attend the Church, and receive the ordinances there; but in a particular manner to press the people in Maryland and Virginia to the observance of this minute." The language of this rule shows at how early a date the Methodists of Virginia evinced their unwillingness to receive the ordinances from the godless men then officiating at the altars of the Church. And however earnestly the preachers may have pressed this matter upon the people, very little success seems to have attended the effort. For six years after the adoption of the rule we find the preachers engaged in measures to secure the ordinances to the people irrespective of the vaunted claims of the Church, or the assumed rights of its ministry. Claiming to be "called of God to the office and work of the ministry in the Church of Christ," and believing that God had honoured them as instruments of righteousness in turning sinners from darkness to light; and satisfied, too, by every just and intelligent construction of the subject, of the perfect right of the people to the ordinances, and of the unfitness of the parish clergy, as a very general thing, to administer them, they were shut up to the necessity of providing for these spiritual wants of their own children in Christ, or of turning them over to the cruel neglect of a Church which, leagued with the world, had driven Christ into the wilderness, and whose ministers, like the unfaithful servant, were addicted, in an objectionable sense, "to eat and drink, and to be drunken." Under these circumstances then, of the refusal of the people, under conscientious scruples, to acquiesce in the "minute" of Conference, and of their own sense of the just and sufficient grounds of that refusal, based as it was upon the unworthiness of those to whom the "rule" sent them for the grace and consolations vouchsafed in the sacraments, they resolved—and it was after patient and prayerful deliberation, and under the exigency of a necessity that presented no other alternative but a voluntary surrender of communion with God in the sacraments—they resolved to meet a demand pressed upon them by the spiritual wants of a pious and pure-minded people, and by a mode, novel it may be, but not in conflict with either the positive precepts or sound principles of the gospel. This transaction, its fruits, the principles on which those

engaged in it proceeded, its effects upon the connexional unity of Methodism during the period of its existence and observance, and the grounds of compromise upon which it was abandoned, and the whole subject respecting the ordinances, referred to the umpirage of Mr. Wesley, forms an event in the early history of Methodism in America deserving of a more detailed and extended notice than it has yet received. As an important feature of the times now passing under review, a full and impartial history of what is known in Methodism as the "Contest about the Ordinances," is necessary to a complete account of the life and times of Mr. Lee.

As already seen, the rule adopted by the Conference of 1773, although intended to compel the attendance of the people of Maryland and Virginia upon the services and sacraments of the Established Church, was ineffectual. It neither made them "attend the Church and receive the ordinances *there*," nor induced them to relinquish the hope of obtaining them at the hands of those from whom they had already received the word of promise. In the Minutes we find no reference to this subject from the period just mentioned, until the session of 1780. But we have abundant proof that the preachers were not silent, nor the people inactive during this interval. The MS. Journal of the Rev. P. Gatch, who entered the itinerancy at the Conference of 1774, has been preserved to the Church,\* and contains some items of information that else had been entirely lost. From this Journal we glean the following facts. At the Conference of 1777, the question was asked:—

"*Ques.* What shall be done with respect to the ordinances?"

"*Ans.* Let the preachers and people pursue the old plan as from the beginning.

"*Ques.* What alteration may we make in our original plan?"

"*Ans.* Our next Conference will, if God permit, show us more clearly."

These questions, according to Mr. Gatch, were the subjects of inquiry at the Conference at Deer Creek Meeting-house, Harford county, Maryland. The Conference to which they were referred for further consideration, was held in Leesburg, Virginia. And

\* It is now in the possession of Rev. C. Elliott, D.D., of Cincinnati, to whom we are indebted for the privilege of making the extracts which bear upon the subject in the text.



here, the same question was again asked, and in the language of Mr. Gatch, it was answered: "We unanimously agree to refer it to the next Conference." In these facts, we perceive there was a general interest felt in the subject of the Ordinances; and not only in the societies, but among the preachers, a deep and absorbing anxiety had succeeded to the indifference and apathy of former years. "The next Conference" before which this now exciting question was to come up for final action, was held at Broken Back Church, Fluvanna county, Va., in May, 1779. The proceedings of this Conference in relation to the Ordinances, its plan of proceeding, and its opinions of the sacraments, will be given in the words of Mr. Gatch, an actor in the scenes, and a participant of the sentiments here described. After various preliminary business of a general character, and a full discussion of the grave question on which they were to make up a judgment, they come to the then customary mode of presenting their conclusions, regardless of the precise measures by which they had reached them.

"*Ques. 14.* What are our reasons for taking up the administration of the ordinances among us?"

"*Ans.* Because the Episcopal Establishment is now dissolved, and, therefore, in almost all our circuits the members are without the ordinances—we believe it to be our duty.

"*Ques. 15.* What preachers do approve of this step?"

"*Ans.* Isham Tatum, Charles Hopkins, Nelson Reed, Reuben Ellis, P. Gatch, Thomas Morris, James Morris, James Foster, John Major, Andrew Yeargin, Henry Willis, Francis Poythress, John Sigman, Leroy Cole, Carter Cole, James O'Kelly, William Moore, Samuel Roe.

"*Ques. 16.* Is it proper to have a committee?"

"*Ans.* Yes, and by the vote of the Preachers.

"*Ques. 17.* Who are the committee?"

"*Ans.* P. Gatch, James Foster, L. Cole, and R. Ellis.

"*Ques. 18.* What powers do the Preachers vest in the committee?"

"*Ans.* They do agree to observe all the resolutions of the said committee, so far as the said committee shall adhere to the Scriptures.

*“Ques. 19. What form of ordination shall be observed, to authorize any Preacher to administer ?*

*“Ans. By that of a Presbytery.*

*“Ques. 20. How shall the Presbytery be appointed ?*

*“Ans. By a majority of the Preachers.*

*“Ques. 21. Who are the Presbytery ?*

*“Ans. P. Gatch, R. Ellis, James Foster, and, in case of necessity, Leroy Cole.*

*“Ques. 22. What power is vested in the Presbytery by this choice ?*

*“Ans. 1. To administer the ordinances themselves.*

*2. To authorize any other Preacher or Preachers, approved of by them, by the form of laying on of hands.*

*“Ques. 23. What is to be observed as touching the administration of the ordinances, and to whom shall they be administered ?*

*“Ans. To those who are under our care and discipline.*

*“Ques. 24. Shall we rebaptize any under our care ?*

*“Ans. No.*

*“Ques. 25. What mode shall be adopted for the administration of baptism ?*

*“Ans. Either sprinkling or plunging, as the parent or adult shall choose.*

*“Ques. 26. What ceremony shall be used in the administration ?*

*“Ans. Let it be according to our Lord's command, Matt. xxviii. 19: short and extempore.*

*“Ques. 27. Shall the sign of the cross be used ?*

*“Ans. No.*

*“Ques. 28. Who shall receive the charge of the child, after baptism, for its future instruction ?*

*“Ans. The parent or persons who have the care of the child, with advice from the Preacher.*

*“Ques. 29. What mode shall be adopted for the administration of the Lord's Supper ?*

*“Ans. Kneeling is thought the most proper ; but, in cases of conscience, may be left to the choice of the communicant.*

*“Ques. 30. What ceremony shall be observed in this ordinance ?*

*“Ans. After singing, praying, and exhortation, the Preacher*

delivers the bread, saying, 'The body of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c., after the Church order."

The Conference at which these measures were adopted, was the regularly constituted session for the year, and had full ecclesiastical power, according to the customs of Methodism in those days, to do all that is here recorded of their proceedings. The meeting held in Kent county, Delaware, April 28th, 1779, preceding the one whose acts we are now reviewing, was not a regular session of the Conference of "Preachers in connexion with the Rev. John Wesley," although it is so styled in the "Printed Minutes." It is true, the circumstances that kept Mr. Asbury from his usual labours in the Church, prevented his attendance at the Conference. But this fact neither lessened the authority of the Virginia Conference, on the one hand, nor augmented the power of the meeting at which he was present, in Delaware, on the other. And it is due to historical accuracy to state that the Northern meeting was convened, in part, for the purpose of preventing the adoption of any measures with regard to the Ordinances. It was not unknown to those assembled in Kent county, that at the Conference at Deer Creek, Maryland, in 1777, over which Mr. Rankin presided, this question about the Ordinances was considered and postponed. The answer to the question was, according to Mr. Garrettson,\* "We will suspend them until the next Conference." And again, in Virginia, in 1778, while Mr. Watters, in the absence of all the English Preachers, was in the Chair, the question was again urged; but it was resolved, as Mr. Garrettson, who was present, says, to "lay it over until the next Conference." And both Messrs. Watters and Garrettson, in their journals, refer to the "little Conference," called for the "convenience" of the Northern Preachers; all of whom knew the question of Ordinances would receive the final decision of the regular Conference, then near at hand; and Mr. Watters, who was present at both, was specially commissioned to communicate to the Virginia Conference the "sentiments" of this meeting, as a kind of protest against the adoption of any measures upon the subject. Under these circumstances, the Virginia Conference complained that an illegal Conference had been held, to keep as many of the Northern Preachers from the session as pos-

\* Life of Garrettson, p. 111.

sible, lest they should join with them in adopting the Ordinances. But, if any such design was contemplated by the "little Conference," it did not prevent action upon it, as we have already seen. But all who were present did not approve of the measure, or the mode by which it was reached; and these took their appointments, for the year, in fields of labour within the circle of Methodism north of the line of those who had, in the judgment of some, so violently ruptured the unity of the Church, and so grievously departed from the unpretending simplicity of its doctrines and worship.

After the adoption of a purely scriptural system of ordinances, and the appointment of a mode of investing ministers with authority to administer them, that, but for the absurd theories and monstrous pretensions of the fable of Apostolical Succession, no one, with any measure of reverence for the Scriptures, and the power of God, would ever have called in question, the committee proceeded to ordain each other, and then to ordain the rest. Nearly, perhaps all, who agreed to the measure, were thus set apart to the full work of the gospel ministry. That, according to the views of the ministry, prevalent in the Church since the usurped domination of Popery, with its inflated notions of the priesthood, this proceeding was novel and informal, we have no disposition to deny. But that it was an invasion of any man's right, or in contravention of any principle or prescript of Revelation, or of any institution of Christ, we as unhesitatingly dispute. And if its character as a Christian transaction, and its claims to the respect and confidence of those for and in behalf of whose spiritual welfare it was enacted, be judged of by the doctrines and laws of Christ, with respect to the sacred office, its entire justification, and the full authority to exercise the ministerial functions by the parties, cannot be doubted. To our apprehension the question is a very narrow one, and may be briefly settled. Thus:—As Christians, it was both the right and duty of the Methodists to partake of the sacraments. As Christians, they could not, without grieving conscience, and violating Christ's institution in appointing a holy ministry to administer the holy sacraments, partake of them at the hands of a worldly and wicked priesthood. And, therefore, their own ministers, those whose labours had been blessed to their salvation,

whom God had thus owned as His servants, these holy men must convey the holy sacraments to them; or, in default thereof, they must disobey Christ, to the detriment of their spirituality, by abstaining from this sacramental communion with Him, who is the Head over all things to the Church. If there be error in the transaction, it is the fault of supposing ordination, under the circumstances, essential to administration.

In one aspect of this affair, and only one, it may be regretted,—it was premature, and without the concurrence of the whole body of Preachers. Owing to this it was only partially adopted, and led to debates and divisions. Preachers and people were brought into collision with each other, the peace of the societies was disturbed, and the unity of Methodism received a violent shock. A cloud overshadowed it, and the demon of discord paralyzed its energies, and defeated its plans. At the close of the year succeeding the Conference at Broken Back Church, there was a small decrease in the membership of the Church.

The members composing the “little meeting,” in 1779, in connexion with some of those who participated in the Fluvanna Conference, held another meeting in Baltimore, on the 24th of April, 1780. This meeting is put down in the Minutes as the regular Conference, and there is no record of the proceedings of the one held in Virginia, although it was appointed, both as to time and place, by the regularly constituted Conference of 1779. Mr. Lee calls the Baltimore Conference the *eighth* Conference; speaks of the one held in Virginia during the ensuing month, and says: “The proceedings of both must be considered together, as it respects the general work.” But in making the Baltimore Conference the *eighth* one in the history of Methodism in America, he evidently omits to recognise the meeting in Delaware, in the preceding year, as a Conference; and also dispossesses the one held in Virginia, of what we can but regard as its legal claim to the rank of *the* Conference of 1780. The reasons for transferring the right, power, and title of Conference to Baltimore is as strange and unaccountable, as are the reasons for inserting the proceedings of the “little meeting in Delaware,” in the Minutes, and omitting those of the Conference held in Virginia, which was regularly constituted and duly attended. We cannot penetrate the cause of these facts, and

the only reasonable conjecture is, that, as the breach in the Church was healed in Virginia, it was mutually agreed to omit all mention in the Minutes, of the Conference at which it was effected. But, notwithstanding this disposition of the official business of the Conference, the proceedings that issued in the restoration of peace and unity to the afflicted societies, are too full of interest, and occupy too prominent a place in the religious history of the times, to be omitted.

Among other items of business, we find the following resolutions of the Baltimore Conference, respecting the subject now under consideration :

"*Ques.* 20. Does this whole Conference disapprove the step our brethren in Virginia have taken ?

" Yes.

" *Ques.* 21. Do we look upon them no longer as Methodists in connexion with Mr. Wesley and us, till they come back ?

" Agreed.

" *Ques.* 22. Shall Brother Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters attend the Virginia Conference, and inform them of our proceedings in this, and receive their answer ?

" Yes."

Mr. Watters\* informs us that two members of the Virginia Conference, Messrs. P. Gatch and R. Ellis, were present at the Baltimore Conference, and endeavoured "to prevent a total disunion." They found, however, very little encouragement; and no kind of sympathy. Indeed, they thought their brethren dealt "hardly with them, and there was little appearance of anything but an entire separation. They complained that" Mr. Watters "was the only one that treated them with affection and tenderness." Before adjourning, however, wiser councils, if not better feelings gained the ascendant in the Conference; and for the sake of unity, they resolved to attempt an adjustment of the difficulty. They accordingly appointed a committee of three with special instructions, but not very limited powers, and sent them to Virginia.

The Virginia Conference for the year 1780, was held at Manakin Town, in Powhattan county, on the 8th of May. To this body,

\* Life of Watters, pp. 79-81.

the committee of reconciliation, appointed by the Preachers in Baltimore, repaired, immediately after their adjournment, and entered into negotiations for the preservation of the peace, and the promotion of the unity of Methodism. They were cordially received by their Virginia brethren. Mr. Watters says: "We found our brethren as loving and as full of zeal as ever, and as fully determined on persevering in their newly adopted mode; for to all their former arguments, they now added (what with many was infinitely stronger than all the arguments in the world) that the Lord approved, and had blessed His own Ordinances, by them administered the past year." With these convictions on one side, and the special instruction to demand, as conditional of union, a positive abandonment of the Ordinances on the other, the prospect of reconciliation was indeed doubtful and gloomy. The writer we are quoting, says, in continuation of his account, "We had a great deal of loving conversation, with many tears; but I saw no bitterness, no shyness, no judging each other. We wept, and prayed, and sobbed, but neither would agree to the others' terms." Two days were occupied in these honest efforts to heal the breach between those, who, notwithstanding the rent, were "of one mind and heart in the knowledge and love of God." In the mean time Mr. Watters preached to the assembled parties, on what may be regarded as a most appropriate text for such an occasion: "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Num. x. 29. Still darkness dwelt upon the subject; "and all hopes failing of any accommodation taking place," the committee resolved to give up the matter, and retrace their steps to the north. During the evening preceding the time fixed for their departure, and while Mr. Asbury was on his knees, alone in his room, in fervent prayer for God's help and blessing, and Messrs. Watters and Garrettson were engaged in the same pious exercise together, in a room over the one in which the Conference was sitting, the Conference resolved to accept a proposition submitted by Mr. Asbury to suspend the administration of the Ordinances for one year; to submit the matter in controversy to Mr. Wesley; and for all the Preachers to meet the next year in a kind of General Conference in Baltimore, for a full and final

adjustment of the whole question in controversy. The adoption of this resolution created a jubilee of joy in the hearts of all concerned in the affair—they wept, they shouted, they praised God, and were full of peace and love. It was the triumph of Christian affection—the submission of private judgment and personal right to the will of the majority, and the general good of the whole. By this act the bands of Methodism were again riveted, and the Societies were drawn into closer fellowship with each other; the Preachers were bound together in “a bundle of love,” with “a three-fold cord,” and God, out of the Holy place, approved their work, and shed forth into their hearts the grace and comfort of the Holy Ghost. The readiness of these men of God to abandon a measure so long and carefully studied, so deliberately and prayerfully adopted, and so happily and successfully exercised, affords a beautiful illustration of the meekness of their wisdom, and the power of their humility. Their subsequent success in winning souls to Christ might have been predicted with entire confidence. It was, under the blessing of God, a direct consequence of their unselfish anxiety to “do good of every possible sort to the souls and bodies of men.”

The healing of these divisions was a cause of unmixed happiness to Mr. Lee. In common with the rest of his brethren he deplored the existence of the difficulty; and great was his joy, when, in the summer of 1780, Mr. Asbury came into North Carolina preaching peace, the messenger of good tidings to all who were waiting for the consolation of Israel—the restoration of unity and confidence among brethren. It was a blessed union; whether regarded as an evidence of the gracious influence of Christian principle, moving the parties to submit their judgments of what was right and just, to the decision of a distant umpire; or as an exhibition of Christian love, in yielding private opinions a sacrifice upon the altar of Christian unity, for the general harmony and benefit of the body. The effects of this amicable adjustment of a serious difficulty were at once apparent. The ministers went to their work reinvigorated and encouraged; the people, satisfied of their disinterestedness and of the singleness of their devotion to the cause of Christ, received them as the “servants of the most high God,” and gave willing ear to their godly and wholesome admonitions. The



work of God received a new impulse; and at the Conference of 1781, the first that assembled after the healing of the breach, a nett increase of more than two thousand souls was reported as the result of God's gracious approval of their self-sacrifice and faithful diligence.

Hitherto we have considered Mr. Lee in the quiet of private life, striving, in an humble sphere, and amidst the busy engagements of his daily calling, to please God, and do good. We must now contemplate him in a new, and widely different scene; but still firm in his adhesion to Christ—fixed in his purposes to glorify God—"rooted and grounded in love" too powerful and quenchless to be lessened or perverted by the turmoils of war, or the disorders and profanity of a military encampment. He is a soldier; not of choice, but of necessity, and by constraint of military authority.

The war between Great Britain and the United States, consequent upon the Declaration of Independence in 1776, had spent most of its fury in the northern sections of the Union. An army occupied the city of Charleston, and the ravages of war were spread over the states of South Carolina and Georgia. The scene of the war was now to be changed. The English, having met with a succession of disasters in the south, commenced a retreat through North Carolina and Virginia, to concentrate their forces again in the north. To prevent this junction, and also to protect her citizens from the ravages of an invading foe, Virginia called out her militia, and sent them with the army of the south to meet the common enemy on the plains of Carolina. The history of the engagements, successes, reverses, and triumphs of the army, during the campaigns of 1780-81, belong to the national records. Our task is to follow one of the humble men, called, by the fortune of war, from the quiet of domestic life to the noisy strife of the tented field. It is the moral heroism of the Christian, rather than the military prowess of the warrior, that we are called to contemplate.

In the summer of 1780 the militia of North Carolina were drafted, and Mr. Lee was numbered among those who must share the events of the storm that was gathering over his adopted state. As a Christian, the lot placed him in a condition of great difficulty. In conscience he was opposed to fighting; yet he would not resist the civil government under which he lived. His sense of honour was

too acute and constraining to allow him to refuse to go, or to flee from the standard of his country. He would accompany the army, but he would not fight. "Thou shalt not kill," was a command too comprehensive, to his mind, to be neutralized by the call of country, or lessened in turpitude by the circumstances of war. His own words will best show the state of his mind.

"I weighed the matter over and over again, but my mind was settled; *as a Christian, and as a preacher of the gospel, I could not fight.* I could not reconcile it to myself to bear arms, or to kill one of my fellow-creatures; however, I determined to go, and to trust in the Lord; and accordingly prepared for my journey."

It was twelve days after leaving his friends, before he reached the seat of the army. The following extracts from his Journal will show the delightful spiritual frame of his feelings, and the quietness of his submission to the will and appointments of God.

"Monday, July 17th, 1780. I left home and set out for the army, and travelled about twenty-five miles to Mr. Green Hill's, where I was kindly used. I tarried there all night.

"Wednesday, the 19th. I set off early in the morning, and travelled about sixteen miles to Mr. Hines'. In the afternoon we had much conversation on spiritual matters, and in the evening, felt my heart more engaged with God in prayer than usual. I felt my dependence upon God, and though I believed that great difficulties lay before me, yet I resigned myself into the hands of God, and felt assured that he would protect and take care of me.

"I did not join the army till the 29th. On the evening of that day I came in sight of the camp, and was soon called on parade, and orders were given for all the soldiers to be furnished with guns. I then lifted up my heart to God, and besought him to take my cause into his hands, and support me in the hour of trial."

The hour of trial had indeed come. As Mr. Lee could not fight, so neither could he bear arms. He was resolved not to take the implements of death in his hands, his body should not even form a support for a gun to lean against. He proceeds with his narrative.

"The Sergeant soon came round with the guns, and offered one to me, but I would not take it. Then the Lieutenant brought me one, but I refused to take it. He said I should go under guard. He then went to the Colonel, and coming back, brought a gun and

set it down against me. I told him he had as well take it away, or it would fall. He then took me with him and delivered me to the guard.

"After awhile the Colonel came, and taking me out a little way from the guard, he began to converse with me, and to assign many reasons why I should bear arms; but his reasons were not sufficiently cogent to make any alteration in my mind. He then told the guard to take care of me, and so left me."

However men may differ with Mr. Lee in his views of war, they must accord him honesty of principle and firmness of purpose. The whole narrative shows the presence and power of a conscience enlightened by the word, and strengthened by the grace of God. He neither shrunk from duty, nor postponed the hour of his trial. He would not compromise his feelings, nor practise a deception upon others, by taking arms that he had resolved not to bear, and conscience would not allow him to use. Nor do we perceive any impropriety of spirit in the transaction. Resolute in his purposes, he was calm in his refusal, and respectful in his deportment. The swellings of self-confidence, the boisterous independence of poorly concealed cowardice, are not seen. He who could stand firm in the presence of power, able, if willing, to crush him, unblanched beneath the gaze of a surprised, and, perhaps, scoffing multitude; must have been upborne by an influence that brings strength out of weakness, and imparts moral courage to the lowliest and least pretending of its disciples. He stood the trial; and entered the prison of the camp as composed and cheerful as he would have crossed the threshold of the Commander's pavilion.

This scene occurred near the site of the present metropolis of North Carolina. He was not alone in the guard-room. He had the company of a Christian brother—a Baptist,—who, for some unknown cause, perhaps a similar scruple, was also under guard. Nor was he without the sympathy of many in the army. He says: "Many of the people came and talked with me, and pitied me, and would leave me with tears in their eyes." Family prayer must be held, too, even in the prison. "After dark," he says, "I told the guard we must pray before we slept." The Baptist brother led their devotions; and morning prayer must not be omitted: "I then told the people, if they would come out early in the morn-

ing I would pray with them." Prayer over, "the soldiers brought him straw to sleep on; and offered him their blankets and great coats for covering. He slept pretty well that night, which was the first, and the last night he was ever under guard." His soul enjoyed sweet peace during all these humiliating and exciting scenes. He writes: "I felt remarkably happy in God under all my trouble, and did not doubt but I should be delivered in due time." It was Saturday night that he spent in confinement. Sunday morning *his* prayer-meeting was to be held. We give his own account of it.

"Sunday, 30th.—As soon as it was light, I was up, and began to sing; and some hundreds of people assembled and joined with me, and we made the plantation ring with the songs of Zion. We then kneeled down and prayed; and, while I was praying, my soul was happy in God; and I wept much and prayed loud, and many of the poor soldiers also wept. I do not think I ever felt more willing to suffer for the sake of religion, than I did at that time."

"*If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*" This is the promise of Christ. Faithfully was it performed in the case before us. The voice of Mr. Lee, in his prayer, had reached the couch of indolence, and brought tears from eyes unused to weeping. God was moving for the deliverance of his servant.

"A little after we were done praying," continues Mr. Lee, "Mr. Thomas, the tavern-keeper (near whose house the army was encamped), came out and talked with me, and told me he was in bed when he heard me praying, that he could not refrain from tears, and he had called to see me, and know if I would be willing to preach to them that day, it being the Sabbath. I told him I would preach, provided he would procure a block or something for me to stand upon; which he readily promised to do. I told him, withal, I wished him to go to the Colonel, for we had no higher officer amongst us, and obtain leave for me to preach; which he did, and liberty was granted. It is but just to state that Colonel B\*\*\*\*\* was a man of great humanity, although a profane swearer. When he heard that I was about to preach, it affected him very much; so he came and took me out to talk with me on the subject of bearing arms. I told him I could not kill a man with a good con-

science; but I was a friend to my country, and was willing to do anything I could, while I continued in the army, except fighting. He then asked me if I would be willing to drive their baggage-wagon? I told him I would, though I never drove a wagon before. He said their main cook was a Methodist, and could drive the wagon when we were on a march, and I might lodge and eat with him. He then released me from guard, and said, when I was ready to begin meeting, I might stand on a bench by his tent. When the hour arrived, I began, under the trees, and took my text in Luke xiii. 5: *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* After I had been speaking awhile, it began to rain, and we were under the necessity of going into the house, where I resumed my discourse. I was enabled to speak plainly and without fear, and I wept while endeavouring to declare my message. Many of the people, officers as well as men, were bathed in tears before I was done. *That meeting afforded me an ample reward for all my trouble.* I felt my heart humble before God, and was truly thankful to him for the grace communicated to my soul. I had no doubt but that all things would work for my good."

It will serve as an additional illustration of the effect produced by the sermon, to state that, at the close of it, "some of the gentlemen went about with their hats to make a collection of money" for the preacher. The sight of this made him very uneasy, and he ran in among them, and begged them to desist. He did not, at that period, feel willing to receive compensation for preaching. He thought if the people could afford to *sit* and hear him, he could well afford to *stand* and preach to them. Selfishness entered not into the composition of his character; unrestrained freedom to serve God in the ministry of reconciliation, was all he desired.

On Sunday, the 13th of August, the army remained in their encampment; and, in the afternoon, Mr. Lee again preached to the soldiers, from Isaiah iii. 10, 11. "Many of the hearers were very solemn, and some of them wept freely under the preaching of the word." In these efforts to bring his fellow-soldiers to the knowledge of salvation, he found many to oppose, and but few to encourage him. Yet the paucity of Christians multiplied his difficulties, without lessening his responsibilities. He knew he would have to give an account of himself to God; and he could not

doubt but his present position was ordered by Providence. It was his duty, therefore, to be instant in season and out of season; to watch in all things, and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He was faithful and endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

The army had penetrated into South Carolina, and were endeavouring to form a junction with General Gates, when, on the morning of the 17th, they received intelligence of his defeat in an engagement, the day before, near Camden. Dismay was spread over the camp, and a retreat was immediately ordered. A deep solemnity pervaded the host; "not an oath was heard for several hours; the mouths of the most profane swearers were shut." Such was the effect of the distressing intelligence. The army continued to retreat until the 28th, when they encamped, near Romney's Mills, on Deep River. The next day, Mr. Lee was taken sick. He, however, on the following day, visited a gentleman named Crump, about three miles from the encampment, where he remained until the 5th of September. During this sickness, he writes: "I was brought to examine my heart closely, concerning my hope of heaven; and was comforted to find that I had no doubt of my salvation; for I believed that should the Lord see fit to remove me from this world, I should be called to join the armies of heaven." It was doubtless a matter of rejoicing that, in those armies, there were no weapons that he might not conscientiously bear; no battles that he might not safely fight.

He rejoined the army on the 5th, and on the following morning he was promoted by the Colonel, from the command of the baggage-wagon to the superintendence of a small corps of pioneers. As Sergeant of this small band, he had a safe and easy berth. But in the vicinity of a victorious, and, as was too often the case, a cruel foe, the necessity of constant vigilance, and the recurrence of frequent alarms during the night, allowed but little chance for rest. Severe marches by day, and but little sleep at night, were trying to flesh and blood.

During the retreat of this body of the army, a scene occurred, that was, perhaps, at the time, not regarded with much reprobation, but which is without justification in any land, or amongst any people, having a code of laws, and owning its supremacy.

The war of the Revolution possessed some elements that gave it the character of a domestic feud. Among the citizens, some, and they were the immense majority, approved of the rupture with England; others, and they were comparatively but a few, opposed and condemned it. The former were designated Whigs, the latter Tories,—a name that to an American was then, and is now, regarded as the compendium of all that is vile. Between these parties there existed a deep and deadly malignity. In the estimation of a Whig, the American citizen that approved the measures, and gave his co-operation to the enemies of his country's rights and liberties—and such were the Tories—was more execrable than those foreign mercenaries, who, for sixpence a day, sought to enslave her. The war between these parties was one of extermination. They fought for life—for mercy was neither given nor asked, so terrible was their hate. One of these, a noted Tory, had been captured by the army during its retreat from South Carolina. For some reason he had been detained a prisoner. But the hate of the patriot band doomed him to destruction. On the night of the 15th of September, while encamped near Salisbury, a band of determined men forced the guard, seized the prisoner, and hurrying him a short distance from the camp, hung him, without authority of law, or remorse of feeling. Slight inquiry was made into the matter; but as no one came forward to confess the fact, it was passed over and forgotten. Crimes such as this are not mitigated by time, and have no defence or justification in the presence of Him who judgeth righteously, and who always, in the blaze of day and the gloom of night, beholdeth the evil and the good.

The retreat was continued, under incessant alarms, and not without cause, that the enemy was pressing close upon their rear. On the 24th, Mr. Green Hill visited the camp, and preached on *Quench not the Spirit*. 1 Thes. v. 19. But they were not always privileged to spend the Sabbath in the holy exercise of worship. On Sunday, the 8th of October, the following entry occurs in the Journal of Mr. Lee. "I was but poorly employed;—we had no religious meeting." During the retreat through Charlotte county, there was a skirmish between the English and American troops, in which several were killed. The roads were

thronged with men, women, and children, with their property, flying before the face of the enemy. This was an affecting scene. Strong, stout-hearted men, mingled their sympathies with exposed and helpless women and children. Whether to beguile the painful feelings that oppressed him, or to test the principles and courage of the man who, except fighting with intent to kill, would perform any duty the exigencies of the army might require, we know not; but certain it is, that, in the midst of this confusion, the Colonel rode to his side, and looking upon the defenceless crowd, some of whom were wounded, he said, "Well, Lee! don't you think you could fight *now*?" Let not the reader smile, nor suspect that sympathy had mastered principle, or that promotion to the command of a small band of pioneers had elicited the martial spirit, and kindled its fires in the hitherto quiet bosom of Mr. Lee. But he did say he *could* fight,—but it must be with switches! "I told him I could fight with switches, but I could not kill a man." With a good bunch of birch he would have made dreadful havoc among the wicked men who had so seriously injured the men, and so terribly frightened the women and children; but he *would not kill*. In obedience to duty, his own breast was bare to the foes of his country; but his own blood should soak the soil where he stood, before he would raise his arm in mortal strife against any one who wore the form in which the Redeemer of sinners had tabernacled among men.

The effect produced upon the army by the annunciation of the defeat of their compatriots, is stated in a preceding page. In the following extract, we have the picture reversed:

"Tuesday, Oct. 10. At night the news arrived in the camp that, on Saturday last, the Americans had a skirmish with the British and Tories, in King's Mountain, where our men gained a complete victory, and killed many of the enemy, and took the rest prisoners. We were all glad to hear the news, but some rejoiced with horrid oaths, and others determined to get drunk for joy. For my part, I felt thankful to God, and humbled before him, knowing that the battle is not to the strong."

The excessive fatigue and constant exposure of the army were producing their invariable effects among the soldiers,—disease was spreading, and deaths were frequent. Here was the true field of



Mr. Lee's warfare. He "went among them where they lay in barns, at the point of death, and talked to them about their souls, and begged them to 'prepare to meet their God.' When convenient, I attended the funeral of those who died, and prayed at the grave."

In such efforts to glorify God; and do good, Mr. Lee was employed until the 29th of October, when he received his discharge, and left the army. The arrival of the main body of the army under General Butler, some weeks previously, under whose command there was also a Sergeant of pioneers, and one being deemed sufficient, the General, in consideration of his being the oldest officer, gave Mr. Lee the privilege of resigning, and also granted him an honourable discharge from the army. He was not reluctant to avail himself of the privilege, but settled his business, bade his acquaintances farewell, and exchanged, joyously, and for ever, the riotous scenes of the military encampment for the more congenial employments of the ministry of reconciliation.

On leaving the army, Mr. Lee took up the line of march, single file, and on foot, for his father's house in Virginia. The war spirit had passed over the path of his journey, and "on more than one occasion, he found it extremely difficult to procure a little bread for his subsistence." Yet, at other times, he found a hearty welcome to the abodes of plenty. Indeed, it was deemed a privilege, during the struggle for Independence, by every true-hearted American, to furnish the defender of his country's rights with food and shelter. He reached his homestead early in November, and was happy to find that God still blessed his father's house, and all that he had. Two of the family, a brother and sister, had, during his absence, been brought to "the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." With these he took sweet counsel; and, in the public and domestic worship of his father's house, they were instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly, and, walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were edified.

As on former visits to the parental roof, Mr. Lee was not idle. Although he still hesitated, from distrust of his fitness for the work, to devote himself wholly to God in the work of the ministry, yet he could no more cease from his efforts to do good, and save souls, than he could relinquish his hope of immortality at the right hand

of God. His heart was fully set in him to "serve God for the promoting of His glory and the edifying of His people." Accordingly he kept up a regular plan of appointments during his stay among his friends. But, although he was in labours abundant, and possessed a joyous assurance of his acceptance in the Beloved, his mind was ill at ease. Of his duty to preach the gospel he was happily without a doubt, but there was an inward impulse, a voice within, moving the depths of his heart, and commanding him to arise and depart, and bear the precious seeds of life to the hearts of the forlorn and dying multitudes, stretching out on every hand, through wide fields, waiting the coming of the sower of the word of God. The itinerancy, that grand master instrument for upturning the soil of far-reaching and desolate moral wastes, threw wide its portals and bade him enter, and, on a broader field, be a harvester for God. The *effects* of that system of ministerial operations, small then, but gradually enlarging, and successfully developing its adaptation to the purposes of Christianity, he had been a delighted witness of from its commencement in Virginia; and he was not a stranger to the blessings it brought to the homes and hearts of redeemed and rejoicing families. Nor was he ignorant of the toil and self-sacrifice, the strange unearthliness of devotion actuating those who, for love of souls, and in submission to Christ, went into the highways and hedges to seek and save that which was lost. He had grown up in the midst of these self-renouncing men. He knew their habits of labour and devotion, that they were in watchings oft, in fastings oft, in peril always, and ceaseless in prayer. And he appreciated their motives, venerated their character, and triumphed in their safety and success. That *they* were in the right place, and engaged in the right work, he was fully convinced,—were not the seals of success around him, was not the superscription of their Divine commission written upon his own heart? But was it the place for him? Could he enter that work? Could he cultivate the corners of that ever-enlarging field, or glean in the path of those heaven-commissioned and mighty men? It was no unwillingness to serve God in any department of His Church, to glorify Him by any measure of toil and suffering, that made Mr. Lee hesitate to go forward in a way so obviously in the line of duty, and for which he was evidently qualified by a rich "experience

of the things of God." If he hesitated, it was that by prayer he might more clearly discern his duty; if he paused, it was that he might the more carefully examine the strange feelings stirred up within him by the mighty strivings of the Spirit. His own language will best indicate the state of his mind with respect to this most important step of his life.

"I had been for some time deeply exercised about travelling and preaching the gospel; and at times it appeared that I could not with a clear conscience resist the thought, and still was unwilling to go, *fearing that I should injure the work of God, which I loved as I did my own life.*"

Willing to go, but held back by a dread of doing injury to the work of God; and yet anxious to settle a question so full of importance in every aspect in which he might consider it, he says:

"I finally concluded that I would change my state," by entering into the married relation, "supposing that I should then be freed from these exercises; but when I made the attempt, I continued to pray, and prayed in earnest, that if it was the will of God that I should ever be called to the itinerant field, that I might not succeed, but by the intervention of some means be prevented." He was prevented. The meditation of his heart came to nought. His prayers were answered, and, in this respect, "matters turned out for his spiritual advantage." He was to be wedded to the Church, and a spiritual seed was all he was to raise up for God.\* Of these, he was the father of many, begotten through the gospel of Christ.

\* At the period here spoken of, matrimony was considered an effectual bar to the itinerancy. A very meagre support was allowed to the ministry, and the difficulties in the way of married men were numerous and full of embarrassment. Hence, only a few married, and they very soon "desisted from travelling," or, as we now phrase it, located. So many of the early Virginia Methodist ministers grew old in celibacy, and died without marrying, that the people seemed to think it wrong for them to marry at all. As late as 1838, when the present writer entered the ministry, it was considered a very impolitic step to enter into the holy estate of matrimony. As far back as 1809 or 1810, the Conference had adopted a by-law, prohibiting its members from taking any steps towards marrying until after they had travelled two years, and been admitted into full connexion. The design of the rule was to prevent young ministers from forming marriage connexions previous to the establishment of their ministerial character, and so far it was a good rule. But its operation was partial, and it was always perplexing. Since 1837 it has become a dead letter. Its

On such a subject as that which so deeply agitated the mind of Mr. Lee, God does not always leave his servants to work out their own conclusions. It may be regarded as a fixed rule of the Divine procedure, in all cases, that the first impressions of duty, with respect to the work of the ministry, are made upon the heart of the individual who is thus separated unto the gospel of God. It could not be otherwise. But these impressions are not confined there. The self-same Spirit "worketh when, where, and how He will." Even while the internal struggles are going on, ere yet they have worked their way outward so as to produce any very marked characteristics upon the external being, others are becoming aware of the existence of the feeling, and interested in it. The half-concealed effort to do good, the decided interest taken in the work of the Lord, the undisguised anxiety to see sinners brought into the way of life, the readiness to work unnoticed, even in little things, if thereby good may be done, these, as they are embodied in the words *devotion* and *zeal*, are shadows foretoking the way of the Lord—the work of the Spirit—in calling men to the holy employments of the ministry. These attract the more pious and experienced brethren in Christ, and long before the person most interested in the issue, has settled the matter to his own satisfaction, the Church has become aware of God's gracious purpose, and is ready to attest her submission to it by admitting his right to the ministry, and clothing him with whatever of authority for the work it may be her province to bestow. And beyond this, facts, proofs of usefulness, are brought in to show that the path of duty lies in yielding to the inward movings of the Spirit. Instances of both of these are furnished in his own narrative of this period of his life.

"My exercises about travelling and preaching still continue. I have often been solicited by the Preachers to take a circuit, but am afraid I shall hurt the cause of God, which I wish with all my heart to promote. I feel willing to take up my cross and follow

chief effect, perhaps, was to excite among the people a prejudice against married ministers, and so far it has done incalculable evil to the Church. It is believed the law of the Discipline on this subject may be traced to this by-law. These facts will explain the reasons why the Virginia Conference was so long denominated the "Bachelor Conference."

Christ, but tremble at the thought of touching the ark of the Lord too hastily."

Some time in January 1781, "A young man," he says, "came to me, and taking me by the hand, told me that on the 12th of May last he came to hear me preach, and was cut to the heart by my discourse; from which he went home and could neither eat, or drink, or sleep, in peace, until the 4th of June; at which time the Lord turned his mourning into rejoicing." In view of this *fact* he "was humbled in the dust, and praised the Lord." And he resolved, since God "had blessed his labours in the conversion of one soul, to try again, and preach for the Lord." But he was not yet ready to "put on the harness;" nor was the time come to thrust him into the harvest. But God was investing the ministry with a more profound and solemn interest in the mind of His servant, and gathering around him a class of evidences of his designation to the holy work, that, by after circumstances, were to be wrought into a clear and indelible conviction.

The year 1781 was one of disaster to the spiritual interests of the Methodists in Virginia and North Carolina. Signs of religious prosperity generally, were good; and some parts of the work were blessed with a gracious revival of religion. But the tramp of the war demon was in the land. Everything was disturbed and disordered by "war and the rumours of war." The ministers could not keep up a regular plan of appointments; and the members of Society were dispersed, or prevented from assembling together. Many of the male members of the Church were drafted, and compelled to reside in the camp, leaving their wives and children a prey to cares and griefs too deep and multiform to admit of attendance at the usual places of quiet and holy worship. Of those in the army, some lost their lives, nobly struggling for their country's freedom; others met a worse fate, fell into sin, and were led captive by the devil at his will—"making shipwreck of the faith." "Some of the Methodists were bound in conscience not to fight; and no threatenings could compel them to bear arms or hire a man to take their places. In consequence of this, some of them were *whipped*, some were fined, and some imprisoned; others were sent home, and many were much persecuted." These were trials indeed. Perilous times had come upon the infant Church. It was well; the

long years of her history, of her trials and oppositions, show how well she bore the yoke in her youth, and how readily she bares her back to the smiter now. Distant, as many of the Societies were in fact, from the scenes of strife, there were yet loved ones in the army; and such were the strong Christian sympathies of these believers for each other, that when one member suffered, the rest were ill at ease. Sometimes when assembled at the place of prayer, they received intelligence of the most painful bereavements. A father, that his son was dead—a wife, that her husband was wounded, and a prisoner in the hands of the foe; or they were sick and likely to die.\* Yet their faith did not fail them. They stood fast, and grace took deeper root in their hearts. Even Methodism, amidst all these discouragements, spread out her branches, and when the storm of war had passed by, her shadow covered a wider circle, and a richer soil, than when it commenced.

On the 17th of April, 1782, the tenth Conference was held at Ellis's Meeting-House, in Sussex county, Virginia. The Societies had so multiplied, and were spread over so large a tract of country, that it was found necessary to hold two Conferences during the year, one in the North, the other in the South. These Conferences, however, were not independent of each other. The Northern Conference being the oldest, and having the largest number of preachers, was allowed a limited supervision, if not a positive jurisdiction, over the proceedings of the other. This power extended to the "making rules, and forming regulations for the Societies." A rule originating in the Southern Conference was nullified, if disapproved by the Northern. But any rule determined by the Conference at the North was necessarily binding upon Preachers and people in the Southern division of the work.† It was, perhaps, owing to this arrangement, that the Conference in the South was held first; and closed its proceedings by adjourning to meet at the time and place of the session to be held in the North. A manuscript copy of the Minutes of the Conferences held at Ellis's Meeting-House, for the years 1782–3–4, now lying before me, has the following running title over the proceedings of the last-named year:—

\* Hist. Methodists, p. 78.

† Hist. Methodists, p. 78–79.

"Minutes of a Conference begun at Ellis's Chapel, Virginia, April the 30th, and ended at Baltimore Town, Maryland, May 28th, 1784." This division, of a still united body, for there was really but one Conference after all, seems to have been designed more for the convenience of the Preachers in the Southern and more distant portions of the work, than for any other object. A Preacher in one division possessed the right to sit and vote in the other. And as the rules and regulations then forming the subjects of legislation, were of a prudential and temporary nature, there was not, that we are aware of, any ground of complaint, or any cause of dissatisfaction at the possession or exercise of the veto power, in the Northern branch of the body. But it is, nevertheless, a power justly liable to objections, and requiring, at all times, to be strongly guarded. The organization of the Church in 1784, and the establishment of a complete and well digested form of discipline, introduced a new arrangement, and gave a compactness and solidity to Methodism, that still stands, a test of the far-reaching acumen of its authors; a demonstration of its congruity for its sole, noble work—the spreading of scriptural holiness over these lands.

At this Conference Mr. Lee was present,—a deeply interested spectator of its proceedings. About thirty Preachers assembled, and they were united as one man. A most harmonious spirit pervaded the body, and presided over its deliberations. The first object of consideration, according to the Manuscript Journal already referred to, furnishes a happy illustration of the character and aims of these men of God. After the names of the Preachers were called, and the numbers in Society reported, the question was asked,—every word of which is of solemn import: "What can be done to revive the work?" The answer, "To hold evening meetings, and to preach in the morning when convenient," evinces the nature of their views of the subject, and their readiness to engage in any work that the collective wisdom and experience of the body might consider proper to the great object of promoting a revival of the work of God. Meetings such as those recommended, have always been held in great esteem among the Methodists. They were in great favour with Mr. Wesley, and his indefatigable co-labourers. And they are in some sort identified with the history of revivals among us. We merely state the fact without attempting to explain it.

The subject of "a regular and impartial supply of the wants of the Travelling Preachers," was a matter, no less delicate than important, that claimed their attention. And the regulation adopted furnishes an edifying proof of their magnanimous self-denial, their generous brotherhood of sympathy and interest. It was resolved that, "everything received in money *or clothing*, should be valued by the Stewards at every Quarterly Meeting, and an account of the Preacher's deficiencies given him to bring to Conference, that he may be supplied out of the profits arising from the sale of the books and the yearly collections. Thus all were brought to a level,—talents and popularity divided their contributions with the laborious but less gifted of their brethren.

In order to prevent improper persons from intruding into the ministry, or continuing therein, it was resolved that the certificate of authority, given to Travelling Ministers, should be annually renewed; and that of Local Preachers, quarterly. The certificate of the former was to testify on its face, "the authority this conveys is limited to the next Conference:" while on that of the latter, was to be written, "this conveys authority no longer than the Preacher walks uprightly and submits to the direction of the Assistant." Another rule adopted at this Conference, and having in view the uncorrupted integrity of Methodism; was intended to prescribe the best and most orderly course of procedure with respect to cases of secession. The question was asked: "By what rule shall we conduct ourselves towards the Preachers and people that separate from us?" The answer was, "Put the people out of Society when they receive, and the Preachers when they administer the Ordinances, if they have been previously warned." This rule, it is presumable, was intended to carry out the provisions adopted for the adjustment of the "Contest about the Ordinances." It was at a Conference held in Virginia that the difficulty commenced. And one of the conditions of the adjustment was that the Preachers should desist from administering them. Of course, if it was a breach of the peace between the parties for the Preachers to administer them, it was also wrong for the members to partake of them. In either case the offenders were to be "put out of Society." It is not improbable but some of those engaged in the proceedings at Broken Back Church, had refused to enter into the



arrangement brought about by the address and influence of Mr. Asbury. These, without a formal renunciation of the authority of the Conference, may have persisted in the administration of the Ordinances. And the people, anxious for themselves and their children to partake of them, and without due consideration of its impropriety, under the circumstances, may have availed themselves of the opportunity of doing so. This view of the case is authorized by the provision, incorporated in the rule, that the delinquent should have "been previously warned" before proceeding to final exclusion from the Society. It is obvious, however, that, in the judgment of the Conference, the administration of the Ordinances by the Preachers, or their reception by the members, was deemed equivalent to separation from the Methodist family. In the body of the rules adopted at this Conference, there is one of a general character that favours the interpretation just given of a particular regulation. It is in these words: "Let the Preachers endeavour to make the people acquainted with these rules, and their utility." The previous enactment of this rule may account for the introduction of the provisional requirement in the one just considered.

A resolution respecting Mr. Asbury, adopted with entire unanimity by the Conference, will serve to show the very high estimation in which he was held by the Methodists, even at that early period of his ministry. It was asked, "Do the brethren in Conference unanimously choose Brother Asbury to act according to Mr. Wesley's original appointment, and to preside over the American Conference, and the whole work?" This question was answered in the affirmative. This strong expression of confidence is a noble testimony to the great ability and disinterested zeal of Mr. Asbury. It is a wall of defence, shielding him from all that personal dislike or frustrated ambition have since invented to lessen his influence, or to stigmatize his fair and honourable fame.

The Rev. Mr. Jarratt was also present at this Conference, and opened its proceedings by a sermon, founded on the 14th chapter of Hosea. Fit subject for such an occasion; whether we consider the recently restored unity and confidence of the Conferences; the present peace and spirituality of the Societies, or the prospective enlargement and triumph of Methodism, when her "branches

should spread, and her beauty should be as the olive tree, and her smell as Lebanon." Mr. Jarratt was a faithful and zealous co-labourer with the Conference. He preached each day during its session ; and agreed, for the healing of the breach about the Ordinances, and to satisfy the just wants of the people, to " visit all the circuits he could," to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. As a testimonial of their high appreciation of his friendship, and his numerous good offices in their behalf, we have the following record on their journals: "The Conference acknowledge their obligations to the Rev. Mr. Jarratt for his kind and friendly services to the Preachers and people, from our first entrance into Virginia : and more particularly for attending our Conference in Sussex, both in public and private ; and we advise the Preachers in the South to consult him, and to take his advice in the absence of Brother Asbury."

But what seemed chiefly to attract the attention of Mr. Lee, during the session of this Conference, was the strong and all-pervading spirit of Christianity so manifest in all their proceedings. Such an exhibition of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, he had never witnessed. It had a powerful effect upon his feelings. The master chord of his heart was touched. The thoughts that had so often thrilled his heart with strange emotions, were settling down into absolute convictions. A chain was circling his soul. His own language will best express the impressions made on his mind by the fraternal temper of the Conference.

"The union and brotherly love which I saw among the Preachers, exceeded everything I had ever seen before, and caused me to wish that I was worthy to have a place amongst them. When they took leave of each other, I observed that they embraced each other in their arms, and wept as though they never expected to meet again. Had the heathen been there, they might have well said, 'See how these Christians love one another!' By reason of what I saw and heard during the four days that the Conference sat, I found my heart truly humbled in the dust, and my desire greatly increased to love and serve God more perfectly than I had ever done before.

"At the close of Conference, Mr. Asbury came to me and asked me if I was willing to take a circuit ; I told him that I could not

well do it, but signified I was at a loss to know what was best for me to do. I was afraid of hurting the cause which I wished to promote; for I was very sensible of my own weakness: at last he called to some of the Preachers standing in the yard a little way off, and said, 'I am going to enlist Brother Lee;' one of them replied: 'What bounty do you give?' He answered, 'grace here, and glory hereafter, will be given if he is faithful.'

"Some of the Preachers then talked to me and persuaded me to go, but I trembled at the thought, and shuddered at the cross, and did not at that time consent."

But though consent was withheld at the time, the sense of duty was riveted, and his heart was gained. Henceforth he was to cultivate the field of the Lord. He continued to fill his regular plan of preaching, and settled his "temporal concerns, in order that he might, at any time, be able to obey the will of God," in entering into the Travelling connexion. Early in November, at a Quarterly Meeting, he was importuned, by the Preachers, to travel a circuit, and gave his consent to make a trial of the matter. After spending a few weeks, in what, it is believed, was then the Sussex circuit, he received a letter from the Presiding Elder, Caleb Peddicord, requesting him to accompany, and assist, Mr. E. Dromgoole in forming a new circuit in North Carolina, contiguous to the town of Edenton. Before meeting with his colleague, he encountered difficulties that somewhat discouraged him, and he was, at least, tempted to abandon an enterprise that presented a thousand difficulties to his mind, not the less appalling from his constant fear of doing injury to the cause of God. But he held on his way, and falling in with Mr. Dromgoole, they pursued their journey, and arrived in Edenton on the 1st of December, 1782. It is probable this was the first visit made to this place by the Methodist Preachers. There was a Church in Edenton previous to the Revolution.\* It was

\* The following anecdote has come down of a predecessor of Mr. Pettigrew. He was not so remarkable for piety as he was for his attention to his herring-fishery. One Sunday morning, the following doggerel lines stared him in the face from the door of the church:

"A very fine church,  
With a very tall steeple;  
A herring-catching parson,  
And a wicked set of people."

still standing, with a resident minister, the Rev. Mr. Pettigrew, at the time of the arrival of these servants of God. According to the fashion of the times, among the class to which he belonged, Mr. Pettigrew was considered a good man. It is believed he was inoffensive; and it is certain he was not unfriendly to the Methodists. There is still in an adjoining county a chapel, known as Pettigrew's Chapel, built by the old parson, and, by express provision in the deed devoting it to religious purposes, it is left free to the occupancy of all Orthodox Christians who hold the doctrine of Infant Baptism. We believe it is still a regular place of worship in the plan of Columbia circuit, North Carolina Conference. On arriving in Edenton, Mr. Dromgoole and his colleague visited Mr. Pettigrew; and on the same day they accompanied him to Church, when, after the parson "read the morning service, Mr. Dromgoole delivered an exhortation; and, by permission, made an appointment to preach the next day." They spent the night with Mr. Pettigrew; and an attentive congregation were willing hearers of the word of life at the parish church on the following day.

Intent on their mission, they left Edenton soon after the service of the day was finished. From the record we have of their journey, they took the direction to Norfolk, along the present stage-route between the two places. It is presumable the town of Elizabeth City, containing now from one thousand to fifteen hundred inhabitants, with three churches, situated nearly midway between Edenton and Norfolk, was not then in existence; at least they say nothing of it, although they were in the immediate vicinity of its site. The country lying between Edenton and Pasquotank River was, at the period of which we write, mostly inhabited by Quakers. They met a rather singular adventure; and, as it appeared to Mr. Lee, a very inhospitable reception, at the close of their first day's journey. Late in the evening, they stopped at the house of a Quaker, and asked permission to spend the night with him. Without either consenting or refusing, he replied, "If you choose to get down, I will not turn you away." They were as much perplexed by this not-refused and scarcely-granted permission, as they would have been by a blunt denial of admission. But night was gathering its all-concealing folds around them; they were in a strange country; there were no taverns; they were they knew not

how distant from another house, and they might meet a worse reception there. It was clearly no time for ceremony. They accordingly put the best face they could upon the matter, dismounted and went into the house, and strove to make themselves welcome. And they had no reason to regret it. They were hospitably entertained. But another surprise awaited them. Before retiring to rest, they proposed to hold family prayer. The Spirit did not move the Quaker to that duty; but he would not refuse his permission. Like their entrance into his house, it must be of their own accord. He would neither approve nor forbid, nor would he be present at it. "If you have a mind to pray," he said, "I will leave the room." And so he did; and, closing the door after him, he left them to such worship as they might feel free to engage in.

They continued their journey through Pasquotank and a part of Camden county, into Norfolk county, Virginia; and returned to Edenton on the 18th of December, through Currituck and the counties bordering upon the Pasquotank and Perquimans Rivers. During this trip they held religious meetings in nineteen different places; and, for the most part, among a people who heard the gospel preached by the Methodists for the first time. They also formed the plan of Camden circuit, which, though covering scarcely one-fifth of its original ground, still stands among the regular appointments of the Virginia Conference. While in Norfolk county, they found some persons who had been in society with the Methodists previous to the war of the Revolution. These were the fruits, it is probable, of the ministry of Mr. Watters, who formed a small circuit in the country adjacent to Norfolk in 1772;\* and of Mr. Asbury, who also preached in the same circuit in 1775; and, by special invitation, extended his labours into Currituck county, North Carolina.† But, during the war, Norfolk had been discontinued as a station, and was not again supplied with a Preacher until 1783. Deprived of a regular supply of Preachers, the Societies had fallen away, until only a mere remnant was found by Mr. Dromgoole and his colleague. Although the four we have described began and terminated in Edenton, yet that place does not seem to have been included in the circuit then formed. In March 1785, Dr. Coke

\* *Life of Watters*, p. 28.

† *Asbury's Journal*, vol. i. pp. 115-120.

was in Edenton, and he says:—"The Preachers ought really to take this place into their plan, and there is a person who will receive them." This supposition is corroborated by the fact that Dr. Coke complains that Mr. Morris, the Preacher on the Camden circuit, had not published his appointments, and consequently he had to preach to very small congregations, or to omit it altogether.\* In the Minutes for 1793, Edenton is first mentioned as a station; it may have been previously included in the circuit. Although the Methodists entered this field of labour at this early period of their history in Virginia, they found it, at least in some measure, pre-occupied by those who were striving to worship God in spirit and truth. In Mr. Lee's Journal for the time, he speaks of dining with a family belonging to the Baptist Church, from whom he and his colleague received the most kind and courteous treatment. Indeed, they found in all their journeyings a people prepared of the Lord, willing to receive them as messengers of the Lord of Hosts, and glad of the opportunity of hearing the word of life. The closing reflection of Mr. Lee, in his narrative of this first attempt to carry Methodism into a new region, will show the effect it had produced in his own mind, especially with its probable ultimate results: "I felt thankful to God for the privilege of visiting that strange people, and I had no doubt but our labours were acceptable to God, and profitable to the people." The district of country embraced in what was the Camden circuit of 1783, remains to the present time full of the good fruits of that first planting. Methodism has struck its roots deep in the affections of thousands; and society takes its character of strength and purity, in some measure, from its precepts and institutions.

In the preceding account of the formation of Camden circuit, the narrative of Mr. Lee has been followed, especially with respect to

\* *Arminian Magazine*, vol. i., 1789, pp. 340-341. Dr. Coke evidently laboured under a mistake in charging this neglect upon Mr. Morris. According to the Minutes of 1784 (Dr. Coke was on his way to the Virginia Conference of 1785), Mr. Morris was on the Hampton circuit, entirely in the rear of the Doctor's course. The Camden circuit, through which he was travelling, had at the time two preachers on it, Richard Ivy and William Dameron. The last-named of these "came to meet" Dr. Coke in Edenton. From these facts, it seems that Mr. Morris might have been very justly spared the censure contained in the published Journal of Dr. Coke.

the name by which it was designated. But it does not so appear in the Minutes for 1783. In the Minutes for that year it stands as Pasquotank circuit, and twenty-two members are reported as belonging to the Society. In 1784, Pasquotank is left out, and Camden is substituted. But in answer to the question, "What numbers are in Society?" the report stands: "Camden and Banks," three hundred and fifty. Yet they are not published as a united circuit until 1788. The fact that the Minutes of the Conferences were never printed until the year 1785, may serve to account for the discrepancy in the name of the circuit, between the narrative of Mr. Lee, and the published Minutes. Or he, and his colleague, may have named it without the sanction of the Conference.

Having filled up the measure of his duty in preparing the outlines of a circuit, Mr. Lee parted with his colleague, and returned to the residence of his father.\* Here he remained, busying himself with some useful work on the farm, engaged in conducting

\* As the name of Mr. Dromgoole may not appear again in these memoirs, and as he filled an important position in Methodism, as one of its earliest ministers in America, it may not be amiss to furnish the following brief but interesting outline of his life, from the pen of his youngest son, the late Hon. George C. Dromgoole, of the Congress of the United States, in a letter to a gentleman of New York:

"To William L. Mackenzie, Esq., New York:

WASHINGTON CITY, 21st January, 1844.

Dear Sir: Yours of the 2d was duly received. My parents were not both natives of the Emerald Isle. My father, Edward Dromgoole, was born in Sligo. When a youth he came to America, a poor boy, with religious impressions and a strong desire for religious freedom. He landed at Philadelphia in 1772—came to Baltimore, and resided in that city, or its vicinity, with a Mr. John Haggerty, a tailor by trade, and a man of most exemplary piety. Edward Dromgoole had been brought up in Ireland to the trade of a linen-weaver. When he came to reside with Mr. Haggerty, that he might not eat the bread of idleness, he assisted him in the business of tailoring. The thimble with which he worked is still carefully preserved in the family. They worked together and prayed together, and thus formed a social and religious attachment, which endured during their joint lives: and the survivor, Edward Dromgoole, to the day of his death, cherished the memory of his departed friend with the fondest recollection. They were disciples, or followers as it was termed in those days, of John Wesley.

In 1774, Edward Dromgoole commenced preaching. While residing with

religious worship at his own appointments, or in assisting the Preachers on the circuit, until the spring of 1783.

It is gratifying to trace the growth of Methodism, to witness the successful development of its plans of doing good. Energy and perseverance are elements of its nature. Its morning periods were full of zeal. Success only served to multiply its resources, and give a keener relish to its great moving principle, a desire to spread Scripture holiness over the earth. It was annually strengthening its stakes, and lengthening its cords. In twelve years from the arrival of Mr. Asbury in America, a line of circuits had been formed, extending from New York to North Carolina, and spread out over the intermediate states. The Minutes of 1783, the period reached in the narrative, report thirty-nine circuits, eighty-two travelling Preachers, and 13,740 members. In Virginia it was still successful. From Petersburg, where Mr. Williams had first commenced his successful career in the state, as a central point, it had gradually enlarged the circle of its influence. Its messengers were among the swamps of the lowlands, and their words of entreaty and warning were heard among the hills and vales of the Western borders. More than twenty Preachers were engaged in publishing the gospel of peace, and nearly 3000 souls were united together in the fellowship of Christian love.

Mr. Haggerty, however, he formed a society or class of Methodists, AND HELD THE FIRST METHODIST CLASS-MEETING IN AMERICA.

He settled in Brunswick county, in the state of Virginia, where he resided until his death, in 1835, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, having been a minister of the gospel for more than sixty years."

Mr. Dromgoole is mistaken as to his father's holding the first class-meeting in America. They had been held several years previously, in New York, and elsewhere.



## CHAPTER IV.

FROM HIS ADMISSION INTO THE TRAVELLING CONNEXION  
IN 1783, TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE METHODIST EPIS-  
COPAL CHURCH IN 1784.

Itinerancy—Mr. Lee enters the Travelling Connexion—Conference in Virginia—Temperance Measures—Slavery—Appointed to Caswell Circuit—A sleepy Congregation—Transferred to Amelia Circuit—Extracts from his Journal—Labours—Experience—Conference of 1784 at Ellis's Meeting-house—Mr. Jarratt's Sermon—Appointed to Salisbury Circuit—Journal—A sick Lady—A dangerous Ford—Anecdote, Note—General Conference of 1784—Inability to attend—Organization of the Church—General Review of the Proceedings and Principles of "The Christmas Conference,"—Mr. Lee at his Work—Meets with Bishop Asbury—Gown and Bands—Travels with the Bishop to Charleston—Inception of his Mission to New England—Preaches in Charleston—Returns to his Work—Administration of Discipline—Closes his year's Labour—Reflections—Prosperity of the Church consequent upon its Organization.

No opinion is more common among the Methodists than that of the Divine approval of their system of itinerant ministry. Nor is it a less common belief that no one can properly enter into the itinerancy without a special Divine designation. This opinion is identical with Methodism in every place of its existence, and may be traced through every period of its history, back to its commencement. It was this consciousness of being "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost," that forced Wesley from the quiet enjoyments of "learned leisure" in Oxford; and it is confessedly the impelling motive of all who, like him, consider the work of the ministry as the chief duty of life, and the wide world as the parish in which their ministry is to be fulfilled. A willingness "to serve God for the promoting of His glory" in any field of His empire, or any department of His work, is the first element of fitness for the ministry; and "the edifying of His people" is the living proof of authority.

In the preceding chapter, the inward workings of Mr. Lee's mind, with respect to the Travelling connexion, have been freely

presented. Actuated by a sincere desire to do good in the earth, yet distrusting his own heart, and fearing he might carry a blight instead of a blessing into the heritage of the Lord, he had spent long years of deep and perplexing anxiety. His hesitancy originated in no unwillingness to serve God; no backwardness to save souls; nor did he shrink from the toils and self-sacrifice demanded by the itinerancy of that early day. No; it was the contest between devotion to the cause of God, and fear of doing it injury:—duty urged him forward, doubt held him back. On both sides the feeling was intense. Even after consent was given, he wavered for a moment; and as his vision stretched out upon the far-reaching fields of moral desolation, whitening on every hand, he felt a trembling apprehension of unfitness for a work that well

“ Might fill an Angel's heart,  
And filled a Saviour's hands.”

But he was graciously withheld from a wrong decision. His trust was in the mighty God of Jacob—He preserves His people “from error and false doctrine,” no less than from “viciousness of life;” and He led His servant in the way of peace. It was with a clear and strong sense of duty that he passed from under the cloud that had so long pressed upon his spirits into the calm and steady sunlight of a quiet and trusting confidence. And that sun was to shine unclouded for ever. Its blessed light was to rest upon life's widest and latest horizon; and its deepest vales were to be cheered by its illuminations. In the strength of that conviction, and the joy of its light, he went wherever Methodism demanded his labours, or the destitution of the people held out a promise of doing good.

At the Virginia Conference held at Ellis's Meeting-House, Sussex county, Virginia, on the 6th of May, 1783,\* Mr. Lee was received on trial in the Travelling connexion. He was entering upon a wider field of usefulness in the Church, and taking higher and holier responsibilities. But there was the same self-distrust, the same quiet determination to follow God in all things, in all his ways.

\* This date agrees with the printed Minutes; and Lee's History of the Methodists, p. 82. But Bishop Asbury, Journal, vol. i. p. 356, says the Conference commenced on the 7th of May. The Rev. M. Thrift, Memoirs of Lee, adopts the same date. For various reasons, I prefer the date of the Minutes.

Weak in himself, he was strong in God. There is a vast difference between a sense of duty to engage in the work of the ministry, and a sense of fitness for the work. One may be tremblingly alive to the awful responsibilities of his calling, who is, nevertheless, fully convinced of the duty to engage in it. These views and feelings are not incompatible with each other. On the subject of the ministry, extremes—the extremes of confidence and timidity, of force and acquiescence—often meet. In the case of Mr. Lee, notwithstanding his hearty submission to the Divine appointment, there is a striking illustration of this truth. After connecting himself with the Conference, he says: “Notwithstanding I have had ten years experience as a Christian, and have been a public speaker more than five years, I trembled at the thought of the station I was about to fill.”

The Conference at which Mr. Lee was received on trial in the Travelling ministry, was one of great concord and peace. The Preachers were men of one work, and they were of one mind and heart in the knowledge and love of God. Many of them had seen the fruit of their ministry in the fields of their labour; the work was enlarging on every hand, prosperity was in all their borders; and as there was no ground for distrust, so there was no occasion for strife. If there was emulation among them, it consisted in an earnest desire to do good. There seems to have been unity, without a note of discord, in all their deliberations. Some of the proceedings of this Conference possess an importance that no distance of time can abate; and show that at that early period of the religious history of Virginia, the Methodists entertained views of Christian duty far in advance of the age, unpopular at the time, it is true, but now regarded, so far as public morals are concerned, as only secondary to Christianity itself. Their decided opposition to the then very common practice of “distilling grain into liquor,” is recorded in language that no ingenuity can misunderstand or pervert. At a Conference held in Baltimore in 1780, the practice of distilling spirits was disapproved of; and they resolved to “disown their friends who will not renounce the practice.” But in Virginia, in 1783, they proceeded yet further, and condemned it as “wrong in its nature and consequences;” and refused to permit their friends

to "make spirituous liquors, or sell, and drink them in drams."<sup>\*</sup> The rule upon this subject deserves an imperishable record. It was a noble testimony; and had no small influence upon the community. They preached in the pulpit what they had resolved in the Conference to be an evil; and the fires of many a still were extinguished, and many orchards were cut down and committed to the flames. From that time to the present the Church has not ceased to declare its unmitigated abhorrence of spirituous liquors.

Slavery also came under the condemnation of the Conference. It had been denounced at the Conference of 1780; the denunciation was repeated here. In his Journal, under date of May the 7th, 1783, Mr. Asbury, speaking of the Conference, says: "We all agreed in the spirit of African liberty, and strong testimonies were borne in its favour in our love-feast." In 1780, an affirmative answer was given to the question, "Ought not this Conference to require those Travelling Preachers who hold slaves, to give promises to set them free?" In 1783, the rule had respect to the Local Preachers, and seems to have been restricted in its operation to those states in which emancipation was authorized by law.<sup>†</sup> But the Journal of Mr. Asbury respecting the feelings and testimonies borne on the subject in the love-feast, indicates the presence, and, to some extent, the prevalence of anti-slavery feelings among the people. Such feelings, though not very general, were occasionally found among the Methodists of the times we are now reviewing. But they were checked, when, a few years after, the Conference discovered it had travelled too rapidly in advance of public opinion, and prudently retracing its steps, reconsidered its decisions, and rescinded its rules; and left the whole subject to be modified by the legitimate influence of Christianity, and ultimately

<sup>\*</sup> The following is the language of the rule. "Ques. Should our friends be permitted to make spirituous liquors, sell, and drink them in drams? Ans. By no means: we think it wrong in its nature and consequences; and desire all our Preachers to teach the people by precept and example to put away this evil."

<sup>†</sup> "Ques. What shall be done with our Local Preachers who hold slaves, contrary to the laws which authorize their freedom, in any of the United States? Ans. We will try them another year. In the mean time, let every Assistant deal faithfully and plainly with every one, and report to the next Conference. It may then be necessary to suspend them." Minutes, 1783.

to the issue of wise and humane laws, guided on either hand by patriotism and philanthropy. As, at a later period of his life, Mr. Lee engaged somewhat in the discussion of the subject of slavery, the reader is referred to a subsequent page for a discovery of his opinions of the matter, and for a more extended notice of our ecclesiastical proceedings on the question.

At the close of Conference, Mr. Lee received an appointment to the Caswell circuit, in the state of North Carolina. This was a newly formed circuit; its name does not previously appear upon the Minutes. His colleague, in charge of the circuit, was Peter Moriarty. From the Conference he returned to his father's, and commenced his preparations for his journey to a distant place, among a strange people. Before leaving the neighbourhood, while riding to an afternoon appointment, on Sunday, the 25th of May, he saw a brilliant meteor darting through the air, in a line from the north-east to the south-west. It moved in a horizontal direction for many miles, until it disappeared below the horizon. A few minutes after it passed from his sight, he heard a noise resembling distant thunder. Perhaps the most remarkable circumstance attending this singular phenomenon was, that the sun was shining at the time. The matter had no other effect upon his mind than to excite his wonder, and raise his thoughts to Him who is the Maker and Preserver of all. In everything, he saw the hand or heard the voice of God. He reached his circuit on the 23d of June; but his stay on it was short. The circuit had been formed by taking a few appointments from some of the adjacent circuits; and he and his colleague had to strike out a new path through what was then a moral desolation. His first appointment was unpropitious and discouraging. It was at the residence of Mrs. Parker. The congregation was small, composed chiefly of labourers, called in from the harvest-field, and unfitted, if not reluctant, to engage in worship. Mr. Lee does not say they went to sleep while he was preaching; perhaps he felt a delicacy, as a young minister, in recording what might have seemed a reflection upon his pulpit-power to please and instruct; but it would be a very justifiable inference to suppose they did. And they might have slept soundly, without any disparagement to the Preacher, young as he was. The transition from the sun of the harvest-field to the shade and rest of the

house, would relieve the stripling of all suspicion of inability to breathe eloquence upon them. Many an older minister has had a sleepy congregation, without half so good a reason for it. But it was his first appointment, and he was a little mortified; and his thoughts wandered over the long path he had travelled from his father's house.

At his next appointment, which was on Sunday, the 29th, at Parish's Meeting-House, he had a more wakeful congregation, and preached with much better success. On the following Tuesday, at the same place, he was much refreshed in his own soul, while endeavouring to instruct and comfort others. His spirit was greatly revived; and the people were considerably affected, while listening to the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. He found, by a joyful experience, that God had not forgotten to be gracious; and he was greatly encouraged with the prospect of contributing to make that moral desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. So it was to bloom and bring forth abundantly.\* But other hands were to plant the trees of righteousness in that fertile soil. Mr. Lee could only deposite a few seeds, and depart to put forth his energies to gather in the ripe fruits of a distant field. Upon trial, it was ascertained that the circuit was too small for the labour and support of two Preachers; and Mr. Lee, as the younger, was removed, and subsequently sent to the Amelia circuit. This change in the field of his labour was not displeasing to him, since it brought him nearer to his home, and placed him among those who had earliest entered into the fellowship of Methodism in Virginia. He had spent but three weeks on the Caswell circuit; and we know not that his ministry had made any very favourable impression upon those among whom he had gone preaching the kingdom of God. From the beginning, it has been a rule among the Methodists, that those who enter into the itinerancy are to submit their judgments, as to the place of exercising their ministry, to the godly decision of those to whom the charge and government of them is commit-

\* Caswell circuit remains to this day a regular appointment, now under the jurisdiction of the North Carolina Conference. It is regarded as one of the best circuits in the Conference, for piety and influence. Methodism is strong in the confidence of community; and is a source of unmixed benefit to many of the most reputable families.

ted. To this rule now, as in every period of his life, Mr. Lee yielded implicit obedience; but, at the time we write of, and in the case before us, it is probable the suggestion to leave the circuit came from his colleague, or was the result of the uttered doubts of the Society as to their ability to provide for both. This conjecture is based upon several facts. Mr. Asbury, who was invested with the general oversight of the Societies, was in a distant part of the work; Mr. Moriarty is not named in the Minutes of the year as an Assistant; and it was some weeks subsequent to his removal from Caswell, and, by the Preachers assembled at a Quarterly-Meeting in Roanoke circuit, that he was directed to proceed to the Amelia circuit. But, whatever the source of the suggestion, or the cause of the removal, he only desired to know that it was proper for him to go; that point settled; every impediment was removed; and he returned on his path with the independence of a freeman and the cheerfulness of a Christian.

It was probably for the purpose of gaining specific instructions as to his future employment for the Conference year, that after leaving Caswell circuit, he went to the Quarterly Meeting already referred to. The following extracts from his Journal will show how faithfully he adhered to one of the rules framed for the government of Methodist Preachers:—"Be diligent; never be unemployed." His life was a servitude to this comprehensive rule of discipline.

"Sunday, 20th of July, I preached at Whitaker's (Roanoke circuit), and the congregation wept under the word preached. When we met the class, the power and presence of the Lord was among us, and many cried aloud.\* I was so deeply affected that I could not speak, till I had stopped and wept for some time. I preached again at night, and the people wept greatly.

"Monday, 21st. We had a very lively meeting at Brother Young's in the day, and again at night, where there were about forty members in Society, and none of them professed to be converted except the leader of the class, but many of the mourners were deeply distressed on account of their sins.†

\* At the Conference of 1779, it was asked: "Ought not every Travelling Preacher to meet the class wherever he preaches? Ans. Yes; if possible."

† The Methodists consider "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to

"Tuesday, 22d, we had meeting at Low's, and the next day at John Clayton's, then went up into Warren county, where I met with John Easter, and held meeting at Wm. Jean's; the next day we came to Benjamin Doale's, in Halifax county, where John Easter preached a profitable sermon.

"Sunday, 27th; we held meeting at Jones' Chapel; the next day at Brother Lock's; the day following at Richard Whitaker's, and the two following days at Tar-River Church. We had a good deal of life among us at these meetings.

"Saturday, 16th, and Sunday, 17th of August, I attended a Quarterly Meeting at the Tabernacle, Roan Oak circuit. The first day we had two sermons, and the next day we had a lively love-feast. Then I preached, J. O. Kelly preached, and J. Easter exhorted. It was indeed a day of the Lord's power, and many souls were comforted. One young man was awakened by the sermon which I preached, who afterwards became a Travelling Preacher.\*

"At this Quarterly Meeting the Preachers concluded that it would be best for me to go to Amelia circuit in Virginia, and fill the place of a Preacher that could not travel any longer. I willingly consented; I crossed Roan Oak River to T. Jones', and tarried all night. The next day I parted with several of the Preachers, and set off to my father's, where I arrived safe on Wednesday afternoon.

"Sunday, 24th. I came to Amelia circuit, and travelled on somewhat successfully until the middle of February, 1784."

Thursday, December 25th, he has these remarks:

"This day the people came out at Thompson's, and we had a comfortable meeting; and my soul was much comforted in preaching to a people who had but little religion, and it was a solemn, profitable time to the hearers.

be saved from their sins," as the "only previous condition of admission into their Societies." They very properly regard the Church as the refuge and resting-place of the penitent; and Christian fellowship as the most effectual help to faith in Christ. Hence they receive penitents to their fellowship; and admit them to the means of grace. And perhaps, in every large Society, a few such may be found. But the case mentioned in the text is the only instance of a whole Society composed of penitents, that has ever fallen under the author's notice.

\* The young man here referred to was Mark Moore, who entered the itinerancy in 1786, and located in 1799.



"At the close of the year I looked back on the many trials through which I had passed, and took a view of the many blessings conferred on my soul, and was truly thankful to God. The Lord give me grace to spend my strength, my talents, and my life to his glory. Amen.

"Saturday, 31st, I preached at Mr. Spain's with great liberty to a good congregation, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon us, and we were bathed in tears. I wept, and so loud were the people's cries that I could scarcely be heard, though I spoke very loud. I met the class,—most of the members expressed a great desire for holiness of heart and life, and said they were determined to seek for perfect love.

"Sunday, 18th of February, I preached at Coleman's with life and liberty, to a weeping congregation. When I met the class, we were highly favoured of the Lord, with a comfortable sense of His love shed abroad in our hearts; the brethren wept, and praised God together. I was constrained to praise God for His goodness to me; I was indeed very happy.

"Saturday, 14th. We held our Quarterly Meeting for Amelia circuit, at old Father Patrick's—we had a good meeting for the first day. On Sunday morning we had a happy love-feast, at which time I wept very much, and prayed earnestly that the Lord would take every evil temper and every wrong desire out of my heart, and fill my soul with perfect love. I felt the pain of parting with my friends in that circuit, among whom I had been labouring for six months. I bade them farewell, and went to Sussex to travel the next quarter.

"Wednesday, 18th, I took my place in Sussex circuit, and preached at my father's house, from Luke xix. 10.: *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* It was a solemn day with me, and I felt a constant breathing after the Lord, and a longing desire to love Him with all my heart. O Lord! hasten to my relief, and grant me the desire of my heart, for thy mercies' sake.

"The next day I preached at the widow Heath's, and the day following, at a place called The College: the day after I preached at Howel's Chapel, where the Lord was pleased once more to visit my soul; I spoke with many tears, and was very happy—the hearers

wept greatly—it was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When I met the class, the people could hardly speak for weeping. It was a precious day to my soul. When I arose in the morning, I spent some time in walking about, meditating, and in earnest prayer. After awhile I went into the woods and sat down, and began to reflect on what the Lord had done for my soul; and then began to think what He was still willing to do for me, till I wept before Him. My cry was, ‘glory to God for ever;’ He is the joy of my heart all the day long; the cry of my soul was

‘I want no sharer of my heart,  
To rob my Saviour of a part.’

“Sunday, 22d, I preached at Ellis’ Meeting-House to a few people, and felt my soul all on fire of love. The next day I held meeting at Bednefield’s, and the day after at Mr. Warren’s. In the afternoon, as I was going home with one of the friends, he told me that the Lord had, not long since, sanctified his soul: his looks and his words satisfied me that he felt what he said: I was so deeply affected at the relation he gave me, that I wept heartily as I rode along the road. Glory to God for his goodness to my poor soul.

‘No pain, no suffering I decline,  
Only let all my heart be thine.’

“Sunday, 29th, I preached at Lane’s Meeting-House, and at night we held a watch-night at Evan’s. I laboured hard that day, and was greatly blessed in my labours; the people were lively in religion, and I was happy in God. I have had very few meetings of late that could be called barren, for I have been much blessed in private and in public, and have had generally much communion with God.

“Sunday, March the 7th, I preached at Robert Jones’, to a serious congregation; and, blessed be God, it was a happy time, and the Lord was among us of a truth. In the evening I went to Wm. Oliver’s, to see Thomas Chew, a Travelling Preacher, who was sick.

“Friday, 12th, was my birth-day. This day I was twenty-six years old, and have enjoyed religion about eleven years; and I thank God for the peace and comfort I still find in my soul. I

feel as much as ever determined to spend my life in the service of God, and to live and die a Christian.

"Saturday, 20th, I preached at Howel's Chapel, from Ezek. xxxiii. 2. It was to me a time of uncommon comfort. When I came to the last part of the text, and to show what Christ had done for the people, that they might not die, many of the hearers wept, and some of them cried aloud. I saw so clearly that the Lord was willing to bless the people, even while I was speaking, that I began to feel distressed for them, and at last I burst into tears, and could not speak for some moments; after stopping and weeping for some time, I began again, but had spoken but a little while before the cries of the people overcame me, and I wept with them so that I could not speak; I found that love had tears as well as grief. My full heart was constrained to cry;—Glory be to God! that I did feel a sincere love to the Lord Jesus. O, that I may love him with all my heart, and serve him all my days.

"I continued to preach with much liberty for a few days after; but by exerting myself too much, and travelling in the snow and wet weather, I took a severe cold, and was scarcely able to travel to my appointments; and for several days I was not able to preach, but would give a short exhortation, meet the class, and dismiss the people.

"Friday, 2d April, I preached at J. Richardson's to a few people. I found it a considerable cross to preach, as Brother T. S. Chew was present; but I considered that Christ died on the cross, and that I must die under the cross, if ever I get to heaven. I felt much concerned for the salvation of the people, and was happy among them. The next day I preached at Wm. Richardson's, where the Lord was pleased to communicate great grace to our souls; many of the Society were in tears when I met the class. Surely the Lord was in that place, and I was truly happy; and yet my cry was, still,

'Tis worse than death my God to love,  
And not my God alone.'

"Sunday, 4th, I preached at Robert Jones', to a serious company of people, and had liberty among them; but the severe cold I have laboured under for some time has bowed down my

spirits, so that I can neither read, nor write, nor meditate, with as much satisfaction as usual. I have lately found my soul much blessed by reading the life of Mr. Walsh.

"April 9th, being Good Friday, I preached at Perkins'; and while I was speaking of the sufferings of Christ, I had a comfortable view of Him by faith, as hanging on the cross, and bleeding and dying for me.

"Wednesday, 21st, preached at Row's. Here, while I was speaking, I was so sensible of its being the will of God that we should be sanctified, that I was ready to believe that He would destroy sin both root and branch. I lifted up my soul to God in prayer, and with tears in my eyes; and, blessed be God, I felt Him near, very near to my soul: my faith and confidence in God were much strengthened. The friends wept much, and some of them said they had been seeking perfect love by works, but they were determined now to seek it by faith, and faith alone."

It has been seen in the preceding extracts, that after spending six months on the Amelia circuit, Mr. Lee was sent to the Sussex circuit, where he remained until the session of the Conference in the spring of 1784. Such changes were very common among the Methodist Preachers in the earlier period of our history in this country. At the present time similar changes would seem to imply unfitness for the work, or the presence of some local cause, making them necessary for the general welfare of the Church, and they would be regarded, to some extent, as discreditable to the reputation of the minister subject to them. But then, they entered into the system. By the action of the Conference, they were sometimes ordered to change with each other quarterly; and at the session of 1782, nearly all the members were required to change at the expiration of six months. Everything was itinerant. The Preachers not only revolved on their circuits, but on their Conferences, and the Conferences, in turn, were locomotive. Methodism itself never had a fixed point. The centre of unity, in her ecclesiastical organization, is an *itinerant* general superintendency.

At an earlier period of his ministry, Mr. Lee was under the conviction that the peculiar sphere of his usefulness would lie in the edifying of believers. And, if we may judge from the portions of his Journal just quoted, he was not altogether mistaken. But

his ministry was efficient among those who were not numbered among the people of God. Many were, doubtless, convinced of sin, and brought to a hearty repentance and true faith in Christ, under his ministry; but to what extent he was thus made a blessing we have no means of ascertaining with any measure of certainty. It may be stated, however, that during the year the number of members in Society was not enlarged, at least the report of 1784 shows a decrease of thirty-nine in the circuit. But as in 1782, "Amelia and Buckingham" formed one circuit, with 200 members; and as in 1783, Buckingham was omitted in the name, and Amelia was returned with 356 members; and as in 1784, Amherst and Bedford circuits, both contiguous to Buckingham, were formed, certainly out of what had formerly composed a part of Amelia circuit, and the former reported with 290 members, it is highly probable that the most, if not all of these members were derived from the Amelia circuit. And if so, then there must have been an increase rather than a decrease on the circuit during the year. These circumstances, in connexion with the effects recorded as having attended the ministry of Mr. Lee, render it nearly certain that under his faithful labours, the Church was not only edified, but multiplied.

In the Sussex circuit, Mr. Lee was among his kindred and friends. His father's house was one of the regular appointments. Amid such associations, engaged in a work so fruitful of blessings; and especially where the ardent and all-pervading piety of his cherished homestead was brought to influence his heart, it is not surprising to find him breaking forth in songs of praise, nor to witness, what must strike every reader of the extracts from his Journal, the increasing steadfastness of his faith, the enlarging circle of his love. He continued to attend his appointments on the circuit until the week preceding Conference; and left behind him the savour of an experience rich in Christian excellence, and the influence of a ministry that had been fruitful in every good word and work.

The Virginia Conference for the year 1784, was held at Ellis's Meeting-House, Sussex county, Va., and commenced on the 30th of April. The printed Minutes for this year bear the running title of "Minutes of some Conversations between the Preachers in connexion with the Rev. John Wesley, *begun* at Ellis's Preaching-House, Virginia, April 30th, 1784, and *ended* at Baltimore, May

28th, following." In previous years the words "*adjourned to Baltimore*," were used instead of "ended at Baltimore." The "business of Conference," according to Mr. Asbury, "was conducted with uncommon love and unity." At this Conference, the question "What Preachers have died this year?" was introduced into the Minutes. Previously no record had been kept of those who died in the work. But it was not until the Conference of 1785, that the notice was accompanied with anything like a biographical sketch of the departed.\* It was at this Conference also, that the practice, still so common, of writing the times of holding the regular fast-days on the back or blank leaf of the class-book, was authorized. The object of the direction was to secure the more general and effectual keeping of the days of fasting which were appointed for each quarter of the Conference year. But, by what seems a strange notion, the Preachers were directed to write upon every "class-book, "The first Friday *after* every Quarterly Meeting, is to be observed as a day of fasting and prayer." This is stated on the authority of Mr. Lee;† the Minutes say nothing about *prayer*, although it was undoubtedly included in the general duty of fasting. At a subsequent period the rule was altered so as to make the Friday *before* each Quarterly Meeting the regular day for fasting and prayer. All Fridays in the year were observed as days of fasting and prayer by the early Methodists. But there is ground for fear that the practice is constantly declining among us. It may be for this reason that "the ways of Zion do mourn!"

Mr. Jarratt was an interested spectator of the proceedings of the Conference, and lent his valuable assistance to promote the unity and prosperity of Methodism. He preached during the session from 1 Tim. i. 4. And as, at a subsequent period of his life, writing about this Conference, he couples it with the act of the Preachers in ordaining each other; and as he seems never to have given place to the doctrine of Apostolical Succession, or to have set up

\* The following are the first answers ever given to the question, "Who have died this year?"

"Ans. Caleb Peddicord, a man of sorrows, and, like his Master, acquainted with grief; but a man dead to the world, and much devoted to God:

"And George Mair, a man of affliction, but of great patience and resignation; and of excellent understanding." Minutes, 1785.

† Hist. Methodists, p. 89.

any exclusive claims for the Church to which he belonged,—only claiming for it an excellence equal to that of “any Church whatever,”—it is not improbable but he took occasion from the text to point out the insufficiency of “endless genealogies,” and the greater value of “godly edifying.” At a subsequent period of his life, unless his biographer took very unbecoming liberties with his letters, Mr. Jarratt regretted the active part he had taken in promoting the cause of Methodism, and wrote severe and bitter things against it. But as this whole matter will more properly come under review in another place, it is dismissed for the present.

From the Conference Mr. Lee was appointed to labour on the Salisbury circuit, in the western part of North Carolina. He was this year placed as first Preacher on the circuit, with Mr. Isaac Smith as his colleague. After a brief visit to his father's, to arrange his business, he started for his circuit, which he reached on the 9th of June. On the 12th, he met his colleague at the town of Salisbury, where they had an appointment to preach; and where, as he says, there was a “Society of truly affectionate Christians.” It was near this place that he was encamped in 1780, when the tory was so summarily executed, according to the account given in a preceding page. During his visit to Salisbury he went out to the spot on which the army had spent four days. With what different feelings must he have surveyed the scene, once so full of uproar and revelry;—how peaceful and quiet now! And how changed *his* condition. A Soldier, not by constraint, but of a ready mind, contending not for corruptible things, but for an incorruptible inheritance,—a Soldier of the Cross.

“In entering upon the field of his labour, he met with great encouragement; *first*, inasmuch as he had an opportunity generally of meeting large congregations who appeared anxious to hear the word of eternal life. *Secondly*, the Lord graciously condescended to own the word preached, to the comfort of believers, and to the awakening of sinners. *Thirdly*, his own soul was frequently comforted and blessed, while striving to benefit others by his public labours.”\* These effects of his ministry, and the gracious dealings of God with his own soul, may be judged of by the following extracts from his Journal.

\* Rev. M. Thrift.

"Sunday, June 13th. I preached at Hern's to a large company of solemn hearers. While I was speaking of the love of God; I felt so much of that love in my own soul, that I burst into a flood of tears, and could speak no more for some time, but stood and wept. I then began again; but was so much overcome that I had to stop and weep several times before I finished my subject. There were very few dry eyes in the house. O my God! what am I that thou art mindful of me? It was a cross to come to this circuit, but now I feel assured that the Lord will be with me, and support me.

"Thursday, 17th, I preached at C. Leadbetter's, on Amos iv. 12, 'Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!' I bless God for that meeting, my heart was greatly affected, and my eyes overflowed with tears. Towards the end of my discourse, the hearers were so much wrought upon that I was in hopes of seeing some of them converted before the close of the meeting.

"Sunday, 20th, I preached at Cole's, but the congregation was so large that the house would not hold them, of course we had to look for another place; we got under the shade of some trees, where I spoke with great freedom, and with a heart drawn out in love for the souls of the people; and I felt a longing desire to bring them to God. When I met the class, the friends wept greatly, while they heard each other tell of the goodness of God to their souls. The comfort I felt in serving God that day would make amends for the sufferings of a thousand troubles,—'Let the people praise thee, O God! Let all the people praise thee.'

"Wednesday, 23d, I preached at what is called Jersey Meeting-House; we had a good meeting, and I was happy in God while I was speaking. When I had finished, Colonel G.'s wife came to me and began to cry, and said, 'I am the worst creature in the world; my heart is so hard I don't know what to do,' and begged me to pray for her. I hope she is not far from the kingdom of God.

"Tuesday, August 10th. I preached at Tillman's, and felt an ardent desire to be of some service to the souls of the people. There was a gracious move among the hearers, and before I got through my discourse, I wept over my audience for some time; none but God knows what I felt at the time; my heart was ready



to break with grief on the account of poor sinners, who were perishing in their sins. In many cases it appeared as if I could preach till I dropped dead in the pulpit, if it would be the means of bringing souls to the knowledge of God. My heart cries out, 'O Lord! revive thy work, in the midst of the years.'

"Monday, October 4th. I preached at Costus', where, after sermon, we held a love-feast, and were greatly blessed together; all eyes were bathed in tears. An old man present, who was seeking the Lord, but had never been converted, rose up and spoke in a most melting manner, and with tears streaming from his eyes, observed: 'I am almost ready to depart this life, and am not prepared to die, and you may judge how I feel.' Blessed be God, it was a day of comfort to my soul: the language of my heart was, O, my God! let me die, rather than grieve thy spirit, or wound thy cause, but may I be for God."

Interspersed with the record of his labours in the ministry, and of his experience as a Christian, there are occasional notices that show how observant he was of what was passing around him. Yet everything was regarded as secondary to the great work of preaching the gospel. Religion is the true philosopher's stone. On one occasion he preached at the house of a man deaf and dumb from his birth, but who had acquired the power of pronouncing the name of his wife and of his brother, very distinctly. But "I could not learn," says Mr. Lee, "that he ever uttered any other word." And, he adds, "he is esteemed a pious man, and, by signs, will give a good experience of grace, both of his conviction, conversion, and of his progress in the service of the Lord; and of the pleasing hope he has of heaven when he leaves this world."

Some time in the summer he was called to visit a lady, Mrs. Parks, who was very ill, and quite unprepared to die. Terror-stricken under the apprehension of dying in her sins, she importuned him to pray for her. He gave her such counsel as was meet under the circumstances, and offered prayer in her behalf. In the conversation that ensued, she confessed that she had been once before near death, and had promised God that if he would raise her up, she would serve him; but as soon as she recovered she had become as careless as ever. And now she was standing upon the last ridge of life, still without God. Her hands and feet were cold. In this

extremity of distress she warned her husband against putting off repentance for a death-bed, and charged him to bring up her children in the fear of the Lord, and to keep them from breaking the Sabbath. She then sent for one of her neighbours, to whom she said, "I wanted to see you; I have thought there was some coldness between us, and I want to die in peace with all." This scene deeply affected Mr. Lee. He wept tears of pious sympathy; and he knelt again in supplication at the throne of heavenly grace, and besought God to pardon her sins before she should be taken out of this world. After prayer she looked more lively, and from that time began to revive. Whether she gave the life, so mercifully spared in answer to prayer, a living sacrifice to God, we have now no means of ascertaining. But the case teaches a most impressive lesson, and one to which we do well to take heed. It is a sad and awful thing to die in sin! And a death-bed is a poor place to commence a preparation for eternity.

During the month of October his own life was put in imminent jeopardy while fording the Yadkin River. The ford was deep and the current strong; and, not being acquainted with the course of the path through the water, his horse became entangled among the pointed and slippery rocks concealed beneath the turbid stream. For awhile his horse was swimming, then plunging over the rocks, and the current each moment bearing him away from the proper track. To render his situation still more perilous, he was encumbered with a heavy overcoat, and was carrying his saddlebags on his arm to keep them dry. Being but an indifferent swimmer, he felt considerable alarm, and cherished but little expectation of being delivered. But his work was not yet finished, and by the good providence of God, he escaped safe to land.\*

It was but a short time previous to this escape from impending danger, that he experienced a merciful deliverance from a calamity

\* At a later period of his life, Mr. Lee and several ministers were fording a river, somewhat swollen. Mr. Lee had on a new hat. A flaw of wind suddenly drove his hat into the river, and the current rapidly bore it away. He checked his horse, and silently watched its course. On, on it went: Turning a rueful face to one of the brethren, he said: "It is written, 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' I'm sure, I love God. But"—sending a longing look after his hat, he said—"how *that* is to work for my good, I am at a loss to perceive." The hat was gone.

no less imminent, but of a different kind. His general health had fallen off, and his affliction was so severe that travelling became painful, and, to some extent, dangerous. On one occasion, while travelling in company with several friends, he was taken so violently ill on the road, that some of the company despaired of his life. In all these afflictions, he held fast to his hope in Christ, and did not doubt but they were sent in mercy, and would all be sanctified to his present welfare and eternal salvation. Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.

On the 12th of December, Mr. Lee received an official notice, informing him that the Rev. Dr. Coke, accompanied by the Rev. Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey, had arrived in America, delegated with authority from Mr. Wesley, to erect the Societies into an independent Ecclesiastical organization, under a form of government the outlines of which had been supplied by Mr. Wesley himself. This notification was received only *thirteen* days before the Conference was to assemble, and he was in delicate health, and five hundred miles from the place appointed for its session; and, withal, it was at a period of the year that forbade the thought of attempting the journey. He very wisely, therefore, resolved to remain on his circuit, and give himself to such employment for the good of souls as the state of his health and the season of the year would allow him to engage in. But the Conference to which he was called, was one so important in its objects; so efficient in its plans for the furtherance of Methodism, and so full, comprehensive, and durable, in its principles and results, that any history of the times would be imperfect, without a detailed and accurate history of its proceedings, as well as the causes leading to it, and the effects it produced upon the form and character of Methodism. Indeed, it forms a most important event in the religious history of the United States. Entertaining this opinion, no apology need be made for the space given to the subject.

Methodism was introduced into America by a series of Providential events. Emigration had dotted several places, isolated and remote from each other, with families of European Methodists. And when, in compliance with their urgent requests, Preachers were sent over from England as helpers of their faith, they had no other Ecclesiastical authority than to preach the gospel, and to

unite believers into the bonds of spiritual fellowship. They were not ordained; and, according to the Ecclesiastical regimen of their founder, they were not empowered to administer the Sacraments. They did not lay claim to the prerogatives and powers of a Church, but desired to be considered as religious Societies, acknowledging the authority and enjoying the communion of the Church of England. In this character, and avowing it as their sole object "to spread scriptural holiness over these lands," they laboured to rekindle the waning fires of the Church, and multiply the number of those who should crowd her courts, and wait at her altars for the Sacraments of Christianity. But in this labour of love, they received no encouragement from the ministry, and but little sympathy from those who received and loved them as servants of the Most High God. Brought into the fold, and enjoying the fellowship of Christ, the people claimed the right to all the privileges secured to believers, according to the promise of the gospel. They and their children were unbaptized; and they ardently desired to partake of the Holy Communion. But, if they were not refused in form, they were repelled by a conscientious repugnance created by the loose and immoral lives of the clergy. They feared to be partakers of other men's sins; and yet the desire of the Ordinances was as a live coal upon their spirits. A few of the Preachers sympathized with them, and saw no good reason for chaining the living spirit of Methodism to the dead carcass of the Establishment. But the majority clung to it long after it had lost all signs of spirituality; and they framed laws forbidding the administration of the Sacraments, or enforcing their reception from a class of men from whose hands the blessed elements would scarcely escape contamination. The desire that craved the Sacraments, and the feeling that spurned the impure clergy, were alike the workings of a deep and profound spiritualism of heart. The only real matter of surprise in the history of these things is, that enlightened, strong-minded, and affectionate Methodist Preachers, should have so long refused the adoption of measures that conscience and revelation would have justified, to meet a demand that had its origin in the first love of the Christian heart. The transactions already described, at the Broken Back Church in 1779, were only the consummation of a long-suppressed anxiety goaded to despair by the clamours of conscience, and the with-

drawal of hope. These just demands for the Sacraments had reached the ears of Mr. Wesley. But what could he do? With very little confidence in the spiritual authority of the Bishops, he yet acknowledged a civil allegiance to them; and one of them exercised Ecclesiastical jurisdiction in America. And without a solitary scruple as to his own just and equal right, to ordain to the holy ministry, with that of the proudest dignitary that occupied a position on the bench of Bishops, he yet hesitated to meet what, to our apprehension, he ought to have regarded as a solemn scriptural demand. But Mr. Wesley was as conscientious as those who looked to him for counsel and assistance. But relief, in a form that would satisfy all, and set conscience at liberty, was at hand. The war that established the Independence of America, nullified the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London, and released Mr. Wesley from all the obligations of civil allegiance to him; and he "violated no order, and invaded no man's right" by ordaining ministers for America. Heretofore, in accordance with the example of Mr. Wesley, the Methodists had maintained some kind of identity,—if that can be called identity which had no affinity in nature, and no unity in fact,—with the Church of England as it existed in this country. But the events that produced our national Independence, destroyed the power of the Church, and leaving it without civil support, and almost without sympathy, it fell prostrate and powerless, a mass of superannuation. Its parishes, heretofore, for the most part, without members, were now left almost entirely without ministers. The ante-revolutionary agreement between the Methodists and the Church of England was *dissolved*, and to preserve their own Ecclesiastical existence, as well as to provide for the now increasing multitudes that everywhere looked up to them for the bread of life, the Methodists were compelled to assert their Ecclesiastical independence. They had the indisputable right to do this; and there was no one possessed of authority to forbid it. The organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church was not in any sense of the word *schismatical*, as there was no religious body for them to divide. It was not even a *separation*, as they were in unity with no Ecclesiastical body in the country. For whatever the nature of the ties that held them in attachment to the English Church, they certainly were not civil, and they did not possess any of the

elements of an Ecclesiastical covenant or compact. The English Church exercised no control over their opinions or their movements; and seemed, so far as its authority or spirit was embodied in, or represented by, the clergy, to claim no other connexion than the license to ridicule their pious feelings, or the liberty to denounce their rights and oppose their progress. And so far as the Methodists were concerned, they held their Conferences, made their appointments, fulfilled their ministry, and multiplied their Societies, with the unrestrained freedom of men who knew no code of laws but the Bible, and only acknowledged allegiance to God. Indeed, when all the circumstances of the parties are considered and contrasted, the connexion, whatever it was, for it had nothing visible or tangible in it, is an anomaly that is not only strange and inexplicable, but for which, if regard for Mr. Wesley be taken out of the way, no satisfactory reason can be given. All this, however, as it shows their confiding acquiescence in the judgment of Mr. Wesley, and their unambitious desires with respect to Ecclesiastical titles and prerogatives, is creditable to the Methodists. A better illustration of the unselfish nature of true religion, or a stronger proof of disinterested zeal for God and the souls of men, could not be given than is furnished by this period of Methodist history.

The increasing success that annually crowned the efforts of the Methodists in America multiplied the applicants for the Sacraments, and lessened the reasons for withholding them. Mr. Wesley, to whom they all looked for direction and relief, had long and patiently weighed the circumstances of the case, and was now prepared to provide for these "poor sheep in the wilderness." In February, 1784, he communicated to Dr. Coke his designs respecting the Societies in America, and unfolded a plan for their more perfect Ecclesiastical organization. And in the following autumn, having invested the Doctor with full powers for the purpose of carrying his measures into operation, he despatched him, in company with the Rev. Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey, to America. These ministers arrived in the city of New York, on the 3d of November; and on the 14th, the two first named met with Mr. Asbury at Barrett's Chapel, in the state of Delaware. Here, Mr. Asbury was first informed of the object for which they had been sent into the country by Mr. Wesley, and he was greatly perplexed by the news they

communicated, as well as at a loss how to act with regard to so much of the plan as concerned himself. "The design of organizing the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal Church was opened to the Preachers present,\* and after due consultation, it was agreed upon, as the best mode of proceeding in the matter, to call a Conference of all the Preachers in the connection, to meet in Baltimore on Christmas-day, for the purpose of considering the subject.† There were, at the time, about ninety Preachers attached to the Conferences in the United States. How many of these attended the Conference in Baltimore is not certainly known. Dr. Coke says, there were "near sixty." But at the time appointed for its session, the Conference was formally opened; and after due and prayerful consideration, "it was unanimously agreed that circumstances made it expedient for them to become a separate body, under the denomination of the Methodist Episcopal Church."‡ In doing this they said they "followed the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the Episcopal mode of Church government."

The *form* of government adopted by the Conference was not only declared to be Episcopal, but the meaning affixed to that term by the body was also defined. In the Minutes of that Conference published in 1785, the following record is found on the first page:

"*Ques.* 3. As the Ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs of these United States have passed through a very considerable change by the Revolution, what plan of Church government shall we hereafter pursue?"

"*Ans.* We will form ourselves into an Episcopal Church under the direction of Superintendents, Elders, Deacons, and Helpers, according to the forms of ordination annexed to our liturgy,§ and the form of Discipline set forth in these Minutes."

A revised form of this Discipline, published in 1787, enters more elaborately into the reasons for forming themselves into an Independent Church, and defines with a more cautious accuracy the nature and powers of the Episcopacy that entered so essentially

\* About twelve had been drawn together by Mr. Asbury to meet Dr. Coke.

† Asbury's Journal, vol. i. pp. 376-8.

‡ Minutes of Conference for the year 1785.

§ The Prayer Book of 1784, prepared by Mr. Wesley, and sent to "the Methodists in America," by Dr. Coke. This was their *liturgy*.

into the composition of their Ecclesiastical organization.\* Of this edition of the Discipline, "Section III." contains a definition of "the Nature and Constitution of our Church," in these words :

"We are thoroughly convinced, that the Church of England, to which we have been united, is deficient in several of the most important parts of Christian discipline, and that (a few ministers and members excepted) it has lost the life and power of religion. We are not ignorant of the spirit and designs it has ever discovered in Europe, of rising to pre-eminence and worldly dignities by virtue of a National Establishment, and by the most servile devotion to the will of temporal governors ; and we fear, the same spirit will lead the same Church in these United States (tho' altered in its name) to similar designs and attempts, if the number and strength of its members will ever afford a probability of success, and particularly, to obtain a National Establishment, which we cordially abhor, as the great bane of truth and holiness, the greatest impediment in the world to the progress of vital Christianity.

"For these reasons we have thought it our duty to form ourselves into an Independent Church. And as the most excellent mode of Church government, according to our maturest judgment, is that of a moderate Episcopacy ; and as we are persuaded *that the uninterrupted succession of Bishops from the Apostles* can be proved neither from Scripture nor antiquity ; we therefore have constituted ourselves into an *Episcopal Church*, under the direction of Bishops, Elders, Deacons, and Preachers, according to the forms of ordination annexed to our Prayer Book, and the regulations laid down in this form of Discipline."

The reasons here given for the organization of the Church, are such as every serious reader must approve as sufficient and imperative. And the mode of government adopted is expressly declared to coincide with their "maturest judgment," both as to its excellency and its suitableness for the great work in which they were engaged. The experience of more than sixty years, during which the system has been tried, as by fire, confirms the judgment expressed by our fathers, and indicates a more than human agency in guiding their judgment, and controlling their decisions in that

\* This is the first edition of the Discipline, in which the different subjects are "arranged under appropriate heads."



eventful Conference. In adopting the Episcopal mode of Church government, however, they disclaimed all those additions of pomp, dignity, and power, that an ignorant and superstitious age of the Church had annexed to the Episcopal office and prerogative. The Episcopacy of Methodism is derived, dependent, and responsible. It claims no *jure divino* authority, to "lord it over God's heritage;" nor was it invested with any attributes of Ecclesiastical independence of law or jurisdiction. The action of the Conference preceding the creation of the office shows that in the "constitution of our Church" the Conference is superior in authority to the Episcopacy. It forms no objection to this position that Mr. Wesley invested Dr. Coke with Episcopal prerogatives, and authorized him to confer the same upon Mr. Asbury. For over this arrangement the Conference held a negative, as is evident from the fact of voting to receive them, and confer upon them Episcopal powers. So also Mr. Asbury regarded the matter, as is clear from his resolution not to accept the office, unless the appointment of Mr. Wesley was first sanctioned by the Conference.\* The Episcopal office, therefore, is derived from the ministry by election and consecration. Even then its authority is limited, its duties well defined, and it is held to a strict accountability by the body conferring the power, to exercise its functions. It was for these reasons it was denominated a *moderate* Episcopacy. Such was the Episcopal office as constituted at the organization of the Church in 1784; and so, in all important respects, it remains to the present time. The changes it may have undergone have consisted mainly in multiplying its duties, without enlarging its powers or lessening its responsibilities. Its true position in our Ecclesiastical economy is that of "one under authority," but having the charge and oversight of others, as the chief executive officer of the Church. But it has no power to make laws, or to ordain rites, ceremonies, and observances for the Church. All this was certainly implied in the terms of the agreement to form themselves into an independent Church under the direction of a moderate Episcopacy. But, knowing the tendency of power to consolidation and enlargement, the Conference was careful not to leave the position of its chief Ecclesiastical officer to be determined by implication, or to be guided in his functions by inference. Hence,

\* Asbury's Journal, vol. i. p. 376.

after defining that a "Bishop is to be constituted by the election of a majority of the Conference, and the laying on of hands of a Bishop, and the Elders present," it settles the nature and extent of the authority committed to his office. It is his duty "to preside as a Moderator in our Conferences; to fix the appointments of the Preachers for the several circuits; and in the intervals of Conference, to change, receive, or suspend Preachers, as necessity may require; to travel through as many circuits as he can, and to settle all the spiritual business of the societies."\* In the Conference the Bishop presides as Moderator, without authority to negative any action of the body. As late as 1806, according to the Rev. W. Watters,† in case of an equal division in the Conference, he exercised the right of giving the casting vote. At a Conference held in Kent county, Delaware, April 28th, 1779, after determining the point that Mr. Asbury "ought to act as General Assistant in America," the question was asked, "How far shall his power extend? Ans. On hearing every preacher for and against what is in debate, the right of determination shall rest with him, according to the Minutes."‡ This was an extraordinary

\* Discipline, ed. of 1787, p. 7. The author prefers to quote this edition of the Discipline, because it is on this subject an improvement on that of 1784, both in form and substance. The whole discipline of 1784 is comprised in a form of Questions and Answers, and also retains the original title of "Superintendent." Thus: "Ques. 26. What is the office of a Superintendent? Ans. To ordain *Superintendents, Elders, and Deacons*; to preside as a Moderator in our Conferences; to fix the appointments of the Preachers for the several circuits; and in the intervals of the Conference, to change, receive, or suspend Preachers, as necessity may require, and to *receive appeals from the Preachers and people, and decide them.*"

"N. B. No person shall be ordained a *Superintendent, Elder, or Deacon*, without the consent of a majority of the Conference and the consent and imposition of hands of a Superintendent, except in the instance provided for in the 29th Minute." This exception is in case of the cessation of the office, "by death, expulsion, or otherwise."

"Ques. 27. To whom is the Superintendent amenable for his conduct? Ans. To the Conference: who have power to expel him for improper conduct, if they see it necessary." In the answer to the 26th question above, the reader will perceive in the last sentence, which is put in *italics*, a marked difference in terms, from the language of the same rule in the Discipline of 1787, as quoted in the text.

† Life, p. 105.

‡ According to the Minutes." At this period the "Larger Minutes," consisting of "Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and others; from the

grant of power, justified, it may be, by the circumstances of the case, and containing a most positive declaration of the unbounded confidence of the Conference in the integrity of Mr. Asbury. It is a beautiful exhibition of the unselfish nature of the subject of this confidence, that he never gave them occasion to consider it misplaced. But, as we have seen, in the more complete and perfect organization of the Church all power was reduced to just limits, and brought within the control of regularly prescribed statutes. How long after the period at which Mr. Watters wrote, the Bishops exercised the right of giving "the casting vote," we have not been able to ascertain; but it has long since ceased. In the Annual Conferences they preside as Moderators over their deliberations, without any right to vote, and with no other authority over them than to restrict their proceedings to such matters as come within the prescribed statutes of the Discipline. They also, in right of their office, preside in the General Conference, but do not enter into its debates, and have no right to vote. Still, their opinions are often sought, and are justly received with great deference and respect.\*

But the ground assumed by the Conference of 1784, in forming themselves into "an Episcopal Church," extends further than the simple recognition of the Episcopal, as a most excellent mode of Church government; and they did more than merely to create the office, and affix limits to the exercise of its powers. An examination of our Ecclesiastical system will issue in the conviction that the principle of a true Scriptural Episcopacy pervades every department of our Church. From the General Conference down to the least influential office known to the system, everything is constructed upon the great all-pervading principle of Superintendence. A spiritual *oversight*—watching over each other for

year 1744" to the period in question, constituted the Ecclesiastical Discipline of Methodism. The resolution, therefore, restricting Mr. Asbury to such a determination of questions as accorded with "the Minutes," was designed to hedge in the otherwise unlimited grant of power conferred by the resolution; and to give legality only to such determinations as corresponded with the letter or spirit of the authorized regimen of the Societies.

\* As late as 1808, the Bishops, as will hereafter be seen, offered resolutions in the General Conference, if they did not discuss them.

good—is the spirit that preserves the integrity, and perpetuates the vitality of Methodism. A well known principle of English law acknowledges the king as supreme, and recognises him as present everywhere. The same principle holds good with regard to Methodism. The General Conference, as the source of law and authority in the Church, is represented so entirely in every department of the Ecclesiastical government, that it may be almost said to be *everywhere*. In the persons and powers of its representatives, the authority of the General Conference is felt in every ramification of official influence. The Bishop is the first and highest executive officer of the Conference.\* In the absence of the Bishop, the Presiding Elder stands forth as his accredited representative; and he in turn is represented by the Preacher in charge, who transmits to the Class-Leader the authority to supply his place in carrying out the designs of the organization in spreading scriptural holiness in the earth. Thus from the fountain of power there is a regular transmission of official authority to the very extremities of the system. The circulation is regular, uniform, and invariable. And the ease and freedom with which everything moves in its appointed sphere, and the efficiency of the whole in producing a most perfect development of organized Christianity, and in promoting its one glorious design of bringing souls to God, is a matter that creates the grateful admiration of its friends, no less strongly than it excites the surprise and dislike of its foes.† It is not pretended that the organization of the Church was in nothing defective, or in everything perfect. Error and mistake attaches

\* "But while he superintends the whole work, he cannot interfere with the particular charge of any of the Preachers in their Stations. To see that the Preachers fill their places with propriety, and to understand the state of every station or circuit, that he may the better make the appointments of the Preachers, is, no doubt, no small part of his duty; but he has nothing to do with receiving, censuring, or excluding members: this belongs wholly to the Stationed Preacher and members." Rev. W. Watters, *Life*, p. 105. The exception here made, by Mr. Watters, to the Episcopal prerogative is, no doubt, as sound and correct in its application to the authority of a Presiding Elder.

† For a more extended treatise on the nature of our Ecclesiastical government, the reader will do well to consult "Notes to the Discipline," by Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury, now happily brought within the reach of the general reader, by the admirable work of Mr. Emory, entitled "History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

to everything human. But it is certainly no meagre proof of the wisdom of our fathers, that the principles of the government adopted by them still constitute the groundwork of the compact and extended superstructure of Methodism; and the measures then adopted are still efficient in action, and available for all the ends of their institution. Their work was honourable, and its results have been glorious. A numerous, enlightened, and enlarging posterity, respect their judgments and approve of their doings.

But the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, complete as it was in itself, and beneficial and wide-spread as have been its effects, has other aspects and connexions than those of mere denominational concern. In assuming independent Ecclesiastical rights, they severed all the relations that, previous to the Revolution, had united them to the Church of England as it existed in America; and they dissolved all connexion with the clergy and laity who still adhered to a foreign spiritual jurisdiction. Nor is this all. The renunciation of the unscriptural and erroneous doctrine of Apostolical Succession, as they did in their declaration "Of the nature and constitution of the Church," brought down upon them a strain of ridicule and denunciation that, with a wonderful fecundity of character and consistency, has preserved its identity of language and spirit to the present times. Whatever their confidence in the goodness of their cause, both with regard to its lawfulness, and its conformity to the word of God, it was certainly trusting too much to the charity and justice of unsanctified humanity to anticipate the approbation of any one, who, upon any ground whatever, might take the liberty of opposing it. Accordingly, it was not long before, upon the occasion of presenting the congratulatory address of the Church to General Washington, the press opened its mouth and demanded to know, "How came Dr. Coke to be a Bishop? Who consecrated him?"\* Thus evincing a temper of uncharitableness that, running through a multitude of writers, must have found its consummation of unkindness and injustice when Dr. Hawks attributed the Episcopacy of Methodism to the ambition of Coke and the dotage of Wesley †

\* Emory's "Defence of our Fathers," p. 83, ed. 1827.

† Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, pp. 170-171.

Various as have been the grounds upon which Protestant Episcopal writers have decried the organization of the Church, they must have the credit of consistency and uniformity with regard to the spirit in which they have ridiculed its ministry as spurious, and its Sacraments as invalid and unsanctifying. And while there is very little reason for doubting that a large measure of this opposition is traceable to the success of Methodism, and the proof thereby furnished of its efficiency in promoting the great design of the gospel in winning souls to Christ, it will not be denied that a sincere love of truth, checked, however, and controlled by prejudice and an imperfect view of the Christian system, has actuated others.

Among the grounds of hostility to the Methodist Episcopal Church, the first, and for a long period the one most zealously insisted upon, belongs to a class of theological subjects that the nature of the present work precludes from a very extended consideration. The opinion referred to is that which denies Mr. Wesley's right to confer ministerial authority by ordination; and the controversy involves the whole question of the origination of ministerial rights: whether they are conferred by ordination; or are derived directly and personally from Christ. The nature of our present undertaking, and the limits we have assigned for its completion, will not allow us to traverse this extended field, much less can we explore its parts and turn up from its depths the facts and arguments that demonstrate the scripturalness of our ministry, the validity of our Sacraments, and consequently the lawfulness of Mr. Wesley's proceedings in the premises. That these proceedings were scriptural, few familiar with them, and who are careful to study the grounds on which they rest for authority, will hesitate to believe. But this subject falls so entirely within the limits of another province of theological investigation, that, after referring the reader to works on the nature and constitution of the Christian ministry, and to those comprehended in the controversy on the dogma of Apostolical Succession, we must dismiss it from our pages.

There is one other ground of opposition to the Methodist Episcopal Church, which has occasioned much invective, and is still the theme of untutored misrepresentation and frothy declamation. It respects the *intention* of Mr. Wesley, in the ordination of Dr.

Coke and his co-operation in the organization of the Church. It is gravely denied that he had any intention to confer Ecclesiastical powers in the one case, or any participation whatever in the proceedings of the other. As this is strictly within the plan we have laid down for ourselves, it will not be out of place to enter into a somewhat detailed examination of the matter.

Dr. Chapman, with what seems a customary disregard of facts, and certainly betrays great and inexcusable ignorance of the subject on which he was engaged in writing, declares that the ceremony enacted in Bristol, on the 2d of September, 1784, was not an ordination, but only the blessing of a good man bestowed upon his fellow-labourer about to enter upon a distant and perilous work.\* After quoting the language of the instrument sent by Mr. Wesley to the Societies in America, by Dr. Coke, and as a testimonial of his consecration to the Episcopal office, Dr. Chapman, in contradiction of the fact stated in the document he was quoting, proceeds to say :

“But if, by this imposition of hands, anything more was intended than the blessing of a good old man upon his fellow-labourer in the ministry, or if the word Superintendent was designed to be used synonymous with Bishop ; then are we called upon to believe the strange anomaly, that one presbyter, as Mr. Wesley styles himself in the instrument, can advance another to a higher order in the priesthood than himself possessed,” &c. Again :

“*But the truth is, no such power was claimed, and no such promotion was intended.* Soon after the ceremony had been performed, Dr. Coke left England, and, arriving in America, forthwith laid his hands upon Mr. Asbury, who was to be united with him in the proposed superintendence. For some time, they contented themselves with their original title ; but, at length, sensible of its ambiguous character, they concluded upon a change, and announced themselves to the public, in an address to the Father of his Country, as ‘Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church.’”

“With what propriety, let the benevolent founder of the sect

\* Sermons upon the Ministry, Worship, and Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church, by G. T. Chapman, pp. 112, 113–116.

himself attest." He then quotes Wesley's letter to Asbury, against being *called* Bishop, and asks :

"And now, brethren, after the recital of language alike perspicuous and emphatic, I ask you if it can be seriously believed that its reverend author *ever imagined himself authorized*, or *that he ever designed*, to consecrate any man to the Episcopal office and dignity? It is impossible; or, if it be possible, it is at least equally rational to believe that black is white, and white black."

Once more: speaking a second time of the letter to Bishop Asbury, he says:

"It explains what was before equivocal in the transaction of Bristol." It "is not language to be used by the supposed ordainer of him who ordained Asbury. It rather indicates grief and indignation, that his clerical blessing upon Coke, his probable imitation of the incident recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Acts, which was not ordination to the ministry, should have been so grossly misconceived."

Whatever may be our views of the position and opinions avowed in these extracts from Dr. Chapman, there is no ground or possibility of misapprehending *his* meaning. This is distinctly announced, especially in the sentences we have *italicised*. He denies that the setting apart of Dr. Coke, in Bristol, September 1784, was an *ordination*, either in the act itself, or in the intention of Mr. Wesley in performing the act. The *right* of Mr. Wesley to consecrate to the Episcopal office, which he also raises, is a distinct question, belonging to another department of theology, that, for reasons heretofore given, we waive the consideration of, without, however, yielding aught upon the subject. The other, is a question of *fact*, lying at the foundation of our Ecclesiastical organization, that we may not omit to consider. To say these declarations originated in ignorance, would be a charitable apology for their author; but, in affirming, as he does on page 116, that he was possessed of the documents in the case, he exempts himself from all the offices of charity, and demands judgment unmixed with mercy in the adjudication of the subject. Again: The question here raised by Dr. Chapman is not whether the Episcopacy established by Mr. Wesley was "authorized and genuine," in the opinions he, and other Protestant Episcopal writers, entertain of the Episcopal office; but



whether it was so in the judgment of Mr. Wesley himself. On the page, and in the connexion just referred to, he denies in the most positive terms, that the Episcopacy of Methodism "was considered by its founder and first Superintendent, to be authorized and genuine." And he seeks to strengthen his denial by the declaration, "All these documents" bearing upon the transaction, "I have in my possession." Here, then, we join issue with Dr. Chapman, and all who, following his unfortunate example, have so strangely misconceived, or grossly perverted "these documents." We need not, for the disproof of these vaunting declarations, go beyond the documents themselves. The testimonial of the consecration of Dr. Coke to the Episcopal office, is sufficient for all our purposes, although we may refer to other documents and facts :

"To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, Presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting :

"Whereas, many of the people in the Southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the usage of the same Church ; and whereas, there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers :

"Know all men, that I, *John Wesley*, think myself to be providentially called at this time, to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And, therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, I have this day set apart as a Superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer (being assisted by other ordained ministers), Thomas Coke, Doctor of Civil Law, a Presbyter of the Church of England, a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

"JOHN WESLEY."

In the circular letter of Mr. Wesley, dated "Bristol, Sept. 10th, 1784," addressed "To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America," and brought by Dr. Coke "to be printed and circulated," he says :

"I have accordingly appointed DR. COKE and MR. FRANCIS ASBURY, to be joint *Superintendents* over our Brethren in North America. As also RICHARD WHATCOAT and THOMAS VASEY to act as *Elders* among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper."

Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey are the *persons* referred to in the testimonial of Dr. Coke's consecration as those who, on the same occasion, were "set apart for the *work of the ministry* in America,"—specifically "to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper." Previously to this act of *setting apart*, they were unordained Lay-Preachers. And since, according "to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England," to both of which Mr. Wesley and the Societies in America desired still to adhere, it was uncanonical for an unordained man to administer these Sacraments, it follows that whatever may have been his design with respect to Dr. Coke, it was his *intention* to confer on these gentlemen both the right and authority to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Their ordination, although on the same day, preceded that of Dr. Coke. Speaking of these transactions, Mr. Moore\* says : "The Doctor and Mr. Creighton (a Presbyter of the Church of England,) accordingly met him—Mr. Wesley—in Bristol; when, with their assistance, he *ordained* Mr. R. Whatcoat and Mr. T. Vasey *Presbyters* for America." Here, then, is clearly one case of ordination, performed by Mr. Wesley, on the same day, in the same room, and with only a brief interval of time between it and that of Dr. Coke, from which in nature and intention it differs in every essential particular. It is a somewhat singular specimen of accuracy that Dr. Chapman, with "all these documents" before him, never even so much as alludes to this feature of a transaction on which he has declaimed with so large a measure of veneration for truth and righteousness ! But let us see how the transaction, as it concerns Dr. Coke, quadrates with the statements and denials of Dr. Chapman.

\* Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 273.

Dr. Coke was already a Presbyterian of the Church of England, and possessed equally with Mr. Wesley the right to administer the Sacraments. There was nothing, therefore, in the transaction having any reference to the Sacraments, at least so far as Dr. Coke was a subject of it. The instrument declares he was set apart by the imposition of hands and prayer, as a Superintendent; and also recommends him as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. This act of ordination was not to confer authority to administer the Sacraments; nor was it a mere act of "blessing of a good old man." But it was, in the belief and intention of the chief actor in the scene, an act for conferring "fuller powers" than those of a Presbyterian, to advance to a higher office in the ministry; in a word, Mr. Wesley thus became "the ordainer of him who ordained Asbury," and he ordained Coke for this very purpose, over and above every other object of the consecration, that he might have authority to ordain others. Short of this, the ceremony, with its accompanying facts, would be without signification. Mr. Wesley, therefore, not only "imagined," but really and honestly believed "himself *authorized*," and did truly, "*design* to consecrate" Dr. Coke "to the Episcopal office and dignity." But the truth of this view of the subject is placed upon the strongest ground of certainty by the fact that Mr. Wesley prepared, and placed in the hands of Dr. Coke, for the use of himself and his successors in the Episcopate, forms of ordination for all the grades, recognised by the transactions in Bristol, and in exact conformity with the Church of England, of the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the Prayer Book, the preface of which bears the date of "Sept. 9, 1784," for "the Methodists in North America," prepared by Mr. Wesley, and sent by Dr. Coke, there are forms of ordination for Deacons, Elders, and Superintendents. These are very slightly altered from the Prayer Book of the English Church. But if "the ordainer of him who ordained Asbury" did not *intend* both to ordain himself, and to authorize Dr. Coke to ordain also, why this alteration of the English forms, and especially on those points on which he avows a difference, as in the substitution of Elder for Priest, and Superintendent for Bishop? In view of his strange and positive denial of all ordinations, in fact and intention, how can Dr. Chapman account for the retention of forms of ordination in the Prayer Book

of 1784! Upon his hypothesis the whole subject is inexplicable. But not only in contradiction of all documents, but in contravention of all personal rights, he affects to know more of Dr. Coke's business in America than the Doctor himself, and complains that on "arriving in America he forthwith laid his hands on Mr. Asbury!" This whole matter is put at rest by the annexed extract of a letter written by Dr. Coke to Mr. Wesley in August 1784, six months\* after Mr. Wesley's proposition to invest him with Episcopal powers for the organization of the American Societies into an independent Episcopal Church. "The more maturely I consider the subject," says the Doctor, "the more expedient it appears to me, *that the power of ordaining others should be received by me from you*, by the imposition of your hands; and that you should lay hands on Brother Whatcoat and Brother Vasey, for the following reasons: 1. It seems to me the most scriptural way, and most agreeable to the practice of the primitive Churches. 2. I may want all the influence in America which you can throw into my scale. . . . But as the journey is long, and you cannot spare me often, and it is well to provide against all events, and an authority, *formally* received from you, will (I am conscious of it) be fully admitted by the people; and my exercising the office of ordination without that *formal* authority may be disputed, if there be any opposition on any other account; I could therefore *earnestly* wish you would exercise that power, in this instance, which, I have not the shadow of a doubt, but God hath invested you with for the good of the Connexion. 3. In respect to my Brethren (Whatcoat and Vasey) it is very uncertain whether any of the clergy will stir a step with me in the work, . . . and propriety and universal practice make it expedient that I should have two Presbyters with me in the work. In short, it appears to me that everything should be prepared, and everthing proper be done that can possibly be done *this side the water*."

In the face of "these documents," was it not the extreme of rashness for Dr. Chapman to charge a "gross misconception" of the *intentions* of Mr. Wesley upon Dr. Coke? A writer who so strangely misapprehends, or so grossly perverts, "documents in

\* Mr. Wesley's interview with Dr. Coke, in which this proposition was made, was in February 1784. Drew's Life of Coke, p. 63.

his possession," and which he boasts of having studied, can have very little respect for the intelligence of his readers, and very little regard for his own reputation.

"The bold impostor  
Looks not more silly when the cheat's found out."

There is one other class of facts, bearing directly upon the general question raised by Dr. Chapman and other opponents of Methodism, collateral in their nature, and yet so conclusive, that we should do injustice to the subject not to introduce them, however briefly, into the discussion. We refer chiefly to the spirited letters between Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, in August and September of 1785, concerning the ordination of Dr. Coke and the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church.\* In one of these letters, Charles Wesley affirms that the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in Baltimore, was done with the aid, encouragement, and authority of John. Speaking directly of its organization, he says: "Have you not made yourself the author of all his (Dr. Coke's) actions? I need not remind you that 'he who does anything by means of another, does it himself.'" To all the complaints respecting the points at issue, John affirms his belief—"I firmly believe I am a scriptural *ἐπίσκοπος*, as much as any man in England or Europe," and therefore possessed as valid a right to ordain. And of the organization of the Church in America, and of the ambition ascribed to Dr. Coke, he declares, "I believe Dr. Coke is as free from ambition as from covetousness. He has done nothing rashly, that I know. He is now such a right hand to me as Thomas Walsh was. If you will not or cannot help me yourself, do not hinder those that can and will." Mr. Wesley *knew* he had ordained Mr. Asbury to the Episcopal office, and that, with the concurrence of the American General Conference, he had erected the Societies into a Church, under an Episcopal form of government. All this Mr. Wesley knew, and he knew it was all comprised in the complaint of his brother; and yet he denies that the Doctor had done anything *rashly*. Thus maintaining that his agent, Dr. Coke, had not transcended the

\* Life of Rev. C. Wesley, pp. 724-733.

limits of the authority committed to him, and vindicating him from the hasty censures of his brother. Indeed, how else could John Wesley have acted, without compromising the integrity of his life? It was his own proposition to send Dr. Coke to America; it was his plan of Church government the Doctor had carried into effective operation; it was he who had *appointed* Mr. Asbury Superintendent; in one word, he was the prime mover in the whole affair, and he was most solemnly bound to shield and defend his "right-hand man" from all the attacks his obedience and faithfulness subjected him to; and, though briefly, he did effectually defend him. More he could not say, without increasing the already great and unnatural exasperation of Charles; and he could not say less, without injustice to Dr. Coke. But what he did say, amounts to a positive assumption of the responsibility of the whole affair. Dr. Coke had obeyed him, and he approved, commended, and maintained him in it.

Such is a brief history and defence of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. More might be said if our limits did not forbid it; but we conceive enough is herein presented to furnish a sincere inquirer with the means of arriving at truth. This is all we aimed to accomplish. But the event itself, in spite of the multitude of efforts to misrepresent its character, and defame those who participated in it, is one that enters too deeply into the history and fortunes of our country, to be overlooked by either the patriot or the theologian. From the centre we have been considering, Methodism has spread out on every hand, keeping pace with the progress of population, giving tone to its general character, and conveying the blessings of grace and salvation to multitudes of souls who else had lived in iniquity, and died without hope. Successful despite of opposition; weak in worldly resources, but strong in the might and majesty of its doctrinal purity, and seeking only to do good in the earth, it need not fear if in the future, as in the past, it can say: "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Circumstances already referred to, determined Mr. Lee to remain on his circuit, and devote himself to the great work of saving souls. On the first day of the year he entered into serious self-examination. The past was a mingled scene of sadness and joy. The present was filled up with humble confidence in God, and noble

and strong resolutions to give himself more entirely to the work of the ministry. The future—the whole area, from horizon to zenith—from the hour on which he stood to the latest moment and remotest point of life's pilgrimage, was to be the field of varied, well-plied, and persevering efforts to do good. He was full of desire, and fixed in his purpose, to win souls to Christ. His heart gave its sanction to this plan of action, and conscience was the attesting witness of the transaction. In his own mind he had peace, the peace of God, that passeth all understanding; and memory returned from the retrospect of past life, laden with the consolations that cheerful and active piety had spread in its path. The toils and privations of the past only served to impel him forward in the race of faith; for these trials were not unaccompanied with the gracious fruits of the gospel of peace. God's blessing was on his soul, and success had crowned his labours. And although he was somewhat feeble in health, from protracted labour and frequent exposure, yet the very fact of a probable abatement of his ministry, stimulated him to greater diligence to make full proof of it. If life was short, souls were precious, and duty was urgent. It was his duty to work; God would provide him with a resting-place. With these feelings he entered upon his work for the year 1785.

In the latter part of January, he had the pleasure of meeting with Bishop Asbury, who was passing through his circuit, on a tour into South Carolina. This was their first meeting after the organization of the Church. Mr. Lee attended an appointment of the Bishop's at Col. Hendren's, in Wilkes county. To his very great surprise, and no little mortification, just before the commencement of the service, Bishop Asbury came out of his room in full canonicals, gown, cassock, and band. Mr. Lee thought it evinced a departure from the plainness and simplicity of dress so common among the Methodists, and the sight was painful to him. He feared the effects of these appendages upon the people in bringing the ministry into disrepute, especially since the people had learned to associate the gown with a ministry corrupt concerning the faith, of loose morals and dissolute lives. The Prayer Book which Mr. Wesley had prepared, and sent to America by Dr. Coke, was also brought into use. But their reign was short. God mercifully preserved His people from such incentives to formalism. In a few

years they were entirely laid aside, and our solemn and spiritual worship, in its subduing and transforming effects, furnishes constant evidence of having found a more excellent way. But the dislike of Mr. Lee extended not to the Bishop; it stopped at the gown and its appendages. Mr. Asbury, whose duties had been greatly multiplied by his elevation to the Episcopal office, was accompanied by the Rev. Henry Willis, who had been ordained Elder at the recent Conference, as an Assistant. He also requested Mr. Lee to travel with him during his trip to the South. The journey thus undertaken was to produce results upon the future history of Mr. Lee, and upon the enlargement of Methodism, that no one could have anticipated at its commencement. In passing through Cheraw, they were kindly entertained by a merchant, in whose employment there was a clerk, a native of Massachusetts. This young man gave Mr. Lee a somewhat detailed account of the social customs and religious condition of his native state. The conversation made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind. It was followed by a desire, that soon settled down into a conviction of duty, to go and preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. It was no sentimentalism, no desire of fame, that fixed itself in the mind of Mr. Lee. He opened his mind on the subject to the Bishop, and expressed his ardent wish to be sent into that distant, and, to him, desirable field of labour. But the Bishop did not perceive the propriety of such an attempt under the present circumstances of the Church. He did not, however, oppose the undertaking, but only postponed the matter to a more suitable occasion. But the impression was perhaps never wholly effaced from the mind of Mr. Lee, until he entered into those fields to scatter broadcast the good seed of the kingdom of God. In the mean time, he strove to reproduce the impressions made on his mind, by transfusing his own sense of its importance into the minds of his brethren in the ministry, and thereby engage them to unite with him in that great work of sacrifice and love.

Continuing their journey, they reached Georgetown on the 23d of February. The next night Bishop Asbury preached to a large congregation of serious and attentive hearers. Just as they were about to start to the place of worship, the gentlemen at whose house they were staying excused himself from accompanying them,



"as it was his turn to superintend a ball that night." This occurrence seems greatly to have disconcerted Mr. Lee. Indeed it appears, from the language of his Journal, that he had some misgivings as to the propriety of partaking of the hospitalities of one whose regard for religion must have been very questionable. He "had been praying earnestly that if the Lord had sent them to that place, he would open the heart and house of some other person to receive them." His prayer was not in vain: for "after meeting, Mr. Wayne," a nephew of the celebrated General Wayne, "invited them to call upon him, and from that time his house became a home for the" ministers. With this gentleman they took breakfast the following morning, and on resuming their journey, he accompanied them to the ferry, and very generously paid for their passage across the river. It was the courtesy of this gentleman, in giving a letter of introduction to Mr. Willis, who had preceded the party to Charleston, that secured for them a cordial reception in that city. What effect this visit may have had in promoting religion in Georgetown, it is impossible to state. Georgetown, as an appointment, appears in the Minutes for 1785, but is afterwards left out until the year 1790, although it may have stood as a regular place for preaching on some of the circuits formed subsequently to 1785. When it appears again on the Minutes, in 1791, it is as a circuit, with two ministers, and forty-three white, and eleven coloured members.

On Saturday, the 26th, they reached Charleston, and were conducted by Mr. Willis, who met them some distance from the city, to the residence of Mr. Wells, a respectable merchant, to whom the letter of Mr. Wayne had made them and their mission known. Here, on the next day, in an old house, once, but no longer occupied by the Baptists, they commenced laying the foundation on which the present Methodist Church in Charleston so firmly stands. Notice had been published in the newspaper of the city, that the Methodists would preach, on the holy Sabbath, morning and afternoon, in the old house. But notwithstanding, a few only came to unite in the worship, and listen to the words of life. Mr. Lee preached the first sermon on this occasion. The text was Isa. liii. 5, 6. He had only about twenty hearers who attended to the whole discourse, but there were many who came in and looked on awhile, and then went off quietly. He preached again at night,

but on what subject we are not informed. In the afternoon Mr. Willis occupied the pulpit. Mr. Asbury took no part in these services during the day. He seems to have given the day to close observation of the religious condition of Charleston, having attended the Episcopal church in the morning, and the Independent in the afternoon. He then entered upon his own work, and commencing on Wednesday evening, spent seven days in preaching to congregations, sometimes large and generally solemn and attentive. Of his first sermon here, Mr. Lee says: "I preached with some faith and liberty, and the people appeared to be quite amazed." And of the second, Mr. Asbury says, "the people were a little moved" while listening to it. One good present result followed the labours of these messengers of Christ,—a thousand have since sprung up in its train. Mr. Wells, who had so kindly opened his house for the accommodation of Mr. Asbury and his companions, was brought to a sense of his condition as a sinner, and was led to forsake the evil of his ways, and to turn to the Lord with a heart unto righteousness. Before Mr. Asbury left the city he had received remission of sins, and was rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. This may be regarded as the first effort made to establish Methodism in Charleston. In 1786 the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley had preached in the city, but this was before form and consistency had been given to the Methodist Societies, and they were known rather as ministers of the Church then established by law, than as the founders of a Church more pure in its forms, compact in its structure, and efficient in its organization, than the one to which they were attached. And in 1778, Mr. Pillmore had visited and preached in the place. But it is not known that, except in the records of the journey, it left any real impression behind. But now the work was begun in earnest. Men were there who to faithful preaching added fervent prayer, and who not only planted and watered, but waited and watched till they saw first the blade, then the corn, then the full corn in the ear. Rich and joyous has been the harvest of that gracious seed-time. Mr. Willis was left in Charleston, as its first stationed minister, by Mr. Asbury, and by his diligent labours a Society was soon formed which has been increased and strengthened to the present day.

After having spent nearly a month in company with Mr.

Asbury, Mr. Lee left him in Charleston, and returned to his circuit. The Conference year was drawing to a close; and what remained of it was devoted to winding up the business of the circuit, preparatory to his departure, and taking leave of the affectionate people of his charge. During his last round, he took occasion to impress upon the minds of the people the importance of a devout and prayerful remembrance of the things they had heard. His subjects were well adapted to this end, and show the deep anxiety of his heart to promote their spiritual interests. At Salisbury, April the 9th, while he was preaching, a female was brought into the liberty of God's children; and many of the people had cause to bless God for the comfort experienced during that day. In the evening of the same day he preached at Hickman's, from Eph. v. 1: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children;" and it was as the bread of life to the souls of those who were waiting upon God. On Sunday, at Hearn's, from 2 Pet. iii. 18: "But grow in grace;"—he taught them the way of compliance with the injunction of the text. The brief outline of his discourse on these words will show the nature of his instructions; as well as their adaptedness to one great end of the ministry—the perfecting of the saints—the edifying of the body of Christ. According to the plan, he defined, I. The different degrees of grace to which a Christian might hope to attain. II. The hinderances to a growth in grace. III. The helps to a growth in grace. And IV. Lay down some marks by which we may know whether we grow in grace or not. Such a subject, in such hands, could scarcely fail to produce a good effect. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the record in his Journal. "I had liberty in speaking to-day, and the hearers were much affected." After the public service was over, he held a love-feast, which was blessed to the godly edifying of all.

Monday, the 11th, he was at Leadbetter's. Here he had a less congenial duty, than that of preaching Christ, to attend to. The Society at this place had been for some months agitated by a dispute, which seems to have created party spirit—that bane of godliness—among the members. As the year was so nearly gone, and Conference was just at hand, Mr. Lee, as some have since done, might have left this disagreeable business to his successor.

But such an evasion of duty did not comport with his views of ministerial responsibility. And as the preservation of a good conscience was one of the great aims of life, he could not shrink from any office that the peace of the Church, and the salvation of souls, required at his hands. Nor could he be unaware of the fact that a minister, entering upon a new field of labour, a stranger, and ignorant of many things respecting the people of his charge, has enough to perplex and embarrass him, without having to enter at once upon the settlement of cases of discipline of long standing, and, perhaps, of intricate character. A more excellent way is for every minister to adjust all such matters of discipline as may arise under his own administration, and leave his successors a clear field and a quiet Church wherein to begin their toils. But if it is gratifying to find such views of duty actuating Mr. Lee, it will be no less agreeable to witness his manner of proceeding in the case referred to. After stating the object immediately before them, and, as is not improbable, pointing out the serious injury arising from such disputes to the Church of the living God, he called them all to prayer. He then briefly exhorted them to love and unity, and called on some of the brethren to engage again in prayer for God's blessing on the meeting. This done, he called on the parties concerned in the dispute to speak all that was in their hearts. The preceding religious exercises had so wrought upon the disputants, that they were ready to forget and forgive, and to drop the whole matter, at once and for ever. But this did not suit Mr. Lee's notions as the better way. He was fearful the evil spirit was only quieted, not expelled from the heart; and he wished each to speak and make a clean breast of it, and then for ever thereafter to hold their peace upon the subject. It was some time—so strong and all-pervading was the spirit of reconciling love—before each could open his mind. In the midst of tears each condemned himself, made the reparation he before had demanded, and craved the forgiveness previously refused to be given. And they promised that they would live in a peace and unity with each other so entire and abiding, that the shadow of the cloud that had filled the Church with gloom should never again rest upon the blessed sunlight of their love one for another. It was with considerable reluctance he

had entered upon the duty of reconciling this difference; but how must he have rejoiced at its successful termination! The blessedness of the peace-maker pervaded his breast, and added a higher relish to the well-spring of comfort that gushed up daily from the quiet depths of his heart.

Two days after the meeting just described, Mr. Lee preached his last sermon on the circuit, to a weeping congregation. The people, in devotion to whose spiritual welfare he had spent the year, were strongly attached to him; and gave him up with many tears. There was good reason for all the evidences we find of a sincere and mutual affection. They had found him a vigilant and faithful pastor—a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to every one his portion in due season; and he had received from them every proof of confidence in his ministerial character, and of regard for his personal comfort. And besides all this, his ministry had not been without some measure of success among them. Some had been brought under the power of the gospel during the year; and the Church was edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied. But what number of members had been added to the circuit cannot be ascertained. The Minutes for the Conference of January 1785 contain no report of the numbers on the different circuits and stations. The gross number of Church members is put down at 18,000, and by a comparison with the aggregate of the preceding year, 14,988, we learn that there was a nett gain during the year of 3012. But no such comparison can be instituted between any particular circuits. In 1783, Salisbury circuit reported only *thirty* members in society; but at the Conference of 1784, under the faithful labours of Beverly Allen, James Foster, and James Hinton, the number had been increased to *three hundred and seventy-five*. And when Mr. Lee left it, it was in a state that held out a fine promise to his successors as a field of useful labour and quiet enjoyment.

The period comprehended in the preceding narrative was a most important one in the religious history of the United States. Methodism had been greatly enlarged; and an entire change had been wrought in its outward form. Henceforth it was to stand on higher ground, under a more compact and systematic discipline, and a

more efficient organization. The law-making department was recognised as residing in a General Conference of the Preachers,\* although no specific provision was made on the subject. The work was divided into Conference districts, independent of each other, but under the same Episcopal supervision, and subject to the authority of the General Conference. But a few years subsequent to this, the inconvenience attending the general assembling of the Preachers was attempted to be remedied by the appointment of a General Council, consisting of the Bishop and Presiding Elders, and endowed with almost plenary powers. This, however, was found not to work well; indeed, it involved the elements of its own destruction, and they fell back upon the original plan of a General Conference.

Another important benefit accruing to the Church from its organization was the privilege of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. At the General Conference twelve of the oldest Preachers were elected to the office of Elder, and three were elected Deacons, the most of whom were ordained at the time. These entered forthwith upon the duty of supplying the Societies with the means of grace they had so long and so ardently desired; and great good was the immediate result. The practice of baptizing the people, and administering to them the blessed memorials of redeeming love, formed a new era in the history of American Methodism. The reader of Mr. Asbury's Journal will not fail to discover, in what he records on the subject, the eagerness with which the people sought the sacrament of Baptism for their children; and his own pleasure at being empowered to bring them into covenant relations with God.

It is not improbable but the anxiety of the Conference to extend these means of grace to all the Societies under their jurisdiction, originated what was subsequently incorporated into the constitution of the Church as an integral element. It is certain the office of Presiding Elder, as it now exists, was not created at the General Conference of 1784, although the Minutes of 1785 contain the names of Elders, who seem to be placed in charge of certain dis-

\* "Notes to the Discipline," by Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury. Article—"General and Yearly Conferences."

tricts of country. But the object of this arrangement was unquestionably to bring the Sacraments within the reach of the people.\*

Nor ought it to be omitted, as a great positive advantage to the temporal and spiritual interests of Methodism, that the Conference gave to the Methodists a form of Discipline, describing the duties and protecting the rights of those who gave in their adhesion to the Ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Church. This form of Discipline embraces all the essential elements of Methodist law, as now recognised. And under the general question, "What can be done to guard against Antinomianism?" it presents a very just and comprehensive summary of the doctrine of justification by faith, and of the necessity of good works as the fruit and proof of faith.

It is not surprising, after the preceding account of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to learn that the proceedings of the Conference gave entire satisfaction to the Methodists.† It enlarged the confidence and veneration of the people in their ministers, as they now stood the accredited messengers of God, clothed with power to fulfil all the functions of the sacred office. The desire of the Sacraments, that had so long agitated the Societies, was met and satisfied. The ministers were united to each other in stronger bonds and a holier fellowship. The people were quiet, contented, and prayerful. And the blessing of God, "like the precious ointment" upon the beard of the prophet, filled each heart with peace, and made every field of Methodism rejoice and blossom as the rose.

\* "When Mr. Wesley drew up a plan of government for our Church in America, he desired that no more Elders should be ordained in the first instance than were absolutely necessary, and that the work on the continent should be divided between them, in respect to the duties of the office. The General Conference accordingly elected twelve Elders for the above purposes. Bishop Asbury and the District Conferences afterward found this order of men so necessary, that they agreed to enlarge the number, and give them the name by which they are at present (1796) called." Notes on the Discipline, by Bishops Coke and Asbury. This extract establishes the two positions in the text, that these Elders were ordained, and received their appointments with especial reference to the administration of the Sacraments. It was a subsequent act of legislation that gave them ecclesiastical authority and jurisdiction.

† Hist. Methodists, p. 407. Life of Watters, p. 108.

## CHAPTER V.

FROM THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH IN 1784, TO THE  
INTRODUCTION OF METHODISM INTO NEW ENGLAND IN  
1789.

The Ministry—First Conference in North Carolina—Beverly Allen—Slavery—General Review of Church Action upon the Subject—Dr. Coke—Collision between the Doctor and Mr. Lee—Historical Facts—Virginia Conference—Effects of Anti-Slavery Agitation—Mr. Lee visits and takes an Appointment in the Baltimore Conference—Journal—Efforts to promote Religion—Conference—Declines Ordination—Kent Circuit—Journal—A blessed Revival—Conference of 1787—Slavery—Spiritual Emancipation—Note—Dr. Coke, his Position defined—Recession from the Engagement to submit to Mr. Wesley—Appointed to Baltimore—A Word in Season—State of Religion in the City—Systematic Labours—Class-Meetings—Instruction of Children—Preaches on the Commons—In the Market-House—Good Results—Great Revival in Virginia—Mr. Lee's Success in Baltimore—Conference in Philadelphia—Dr. Rush—Appointed to Flanders Circuit—Calvinism—Anecdote—Revival—Singular Conversion.

THE ministry of Methodism is a ministry of toil. This has been one of its chief characteristics from the beginning; and it is applied not so much to the extent of its fields and the number of its appointments, as to its faithfulness in cultivating "Immanuel's Land." It is regarded as a maxim in agriculture, that a small farm well cultivated is more productive than a large one scantily supplied with labour and tillage. The principle will apply to ministerial work. A large circuit, partially attended to, will yield but little increase in those things that constitute the true riches and prosperity of the Church of God. And a small one, well cultivated and constantly cared for, does not always satisfy the expectations of the labourer. It is "God that giveth the increase." But, perhaps, the size or character of a circuit has less to do with success in building up the Church of Christ, than the faithfulness and industry of the minister. An early entrance upon the duties of a circuit, a diligent attention to all its demands, and a late continuance at the work, if they do not guaranty success, will certainly furnish very good evidence



of a sincere desire to make full proof of the ministry. And certainly a fruitful ministry cannot properly be looked for in connexion with a careless and inefficient attention to its demands. In the preceding chapter we have seen with what diligence Mr. Lee attended to the various duties of his circuit, and the reflex influence of his faithfulness upon his own spiritual affections. He closed his labours on the Salisbury circuit on the 13th of April, and on the next day started to Conference.

The Conference, for the southern division of the work for the year, was held at the residence of the Rev. Green Hill, in North Carolina. This was the first Conference held in the state. It commenced on Wednesday, the 20th of April, 1785, and closed on the following Friday. About twenty preachers were present, and their business was despatched in harmony and peace. Methodism was still prosperous in all their borders. The ministers had been successful, and had come up from their different fields of labour with tidings of success, bringing their own cheerful and happy hearts a contribution to the quiet and harmony of the Conference. In summing up the actual additions to the ranks of Methodism, it was found that nine hundred and ninety-one persons had given in their adhesion to its principles; and their talents and influence to the promotion of its success in saving souls. Of these, according to Dr. Coke, one hundred and ten were in South Carolina, and had been brought into the Church chiefly through the instrumentality of a Local Preacher, who had recently settled in the state. The labours of the ministry had also extended into Georgia, and the whole state appears, on the plan of appointments, as a circuit, with a solitary minister to superintend its spiritual concerns!

At this Conference, Beverly Allen, who had been elected Elder at the Conference in Baltimore, was ordained, first a Deacon, afterward an Elder. This was probably the first ordination ever performed in the North Carolina Conference. He was appointed to the arduous work of introducing Methodism into Georgia; and at the Conference of 1786, he returned a membership of seventy-eight whites. The subsequent history of Mr. Allen is full of mournful interest. He was a popular preacher, and possessed capabilities of great usefulness. But, after occupying a post of so much trust and

responsibility, and gathering around him the endearments and obligations of domestic life, he fell into sin, and, it is probable, terminated by an infamous death, a life whose morning was all overcharged with the brilliant hues of promise and hope. The last account we have been able to discover of Mr. Allen, he was the tenant of a prison, charged with the murder of a fellow-creature. Here history leaves him—a melancholy end of a career so well and so usefully commenced.

The only apparent interruption of the harmony of the Conference, was occasioned by the introduction of the subject of slavery. It was brought forward in the regular business of Conference, and strongly urged by Dr. Coke; and his views were mildly, but with firmness, opposed by Mr. Lee. It is not improbable but this was the first instance of hostility he had encountered; and he not only debated with vehemence the point of dispute, but urged the opinions of Mr. Lee concerning slavery as an objection to the passage of his character. Dr. Coke was conscientiously opposed to slavery. With a zeal more to be respected in its motives than in its disregard of circumstances, and its undistinguishing censures, he had preached against slavery from the time of his first entrance into America. Yet, with an honest independence of character, he did not hesitate to declare his impatient abhorrence of the system, in the presence of those most concerned in upholding it, and in the face of the muttered execrations of its friends.\* We admire his manliness in the avowal of his opinions, but we regret the imprudent zeal that led him, upon a questionable matter, to pursue a course that had the effect of building an impassable barrier in the path of the higher and holier duties of his calling. The course Dr. Coke deemed it proper to pursue, in denouncing slaveholding, is the more surprising, since, from every indication of the times, the Church was undergoing a transition from a vehement denun-

\* In his Journal, under date of April 8, 1785, in North Carolina, he says: "The testimony I bore in this place against slaveholding, provoked many of the unawakened to retire out of the barn, and to combine together to flog me as soon as I came out. A high-headed lady also went out, and cried out, as I was afterwards informed, that she would give fifty pounds if they would give that little doctor one hundred lashes. When I came out, they surrounded me, but had power only to talk." In another place he says: "A mob came to meet me with staves and clubs."

ciatory spirit to a more just and rational consideration of the subject of slavery. The Church had already discovered what it is strange she did not at first perceive, that Ecclesiastical censures possessed no civil authority, and that sermons condemnatory of slavery were, in fact, the surrender of opportunities to win men from the slavery of sin to the freedom of faith in Christ. Then, as now, the employment of the pulpit to break the fetters of the slave, only strengthened their bonds and made them more oppressive and galling. For, although under the forcible and affecting appeals of the pulpit, a few—comparatively a *very few*—emancipated their slaves, yet no corresponding effect was produced upon society. And while it is doubted whether the few who were emancipated were really benefitted by the change, it is quite certain the so eagerly sought object of immediate emancipation was materially injured, and the influence and success of Methodism was most seriously abridged.\*

In the preceding chapter, there is a brief reference to the action of the Church on the subject of slavery. But a more detailed statement of the whole matter was promised, and is due to the memory of our fathers, and to a full understanding of the history of the times. And the connexion of Mr. Lee with the measures that led to the amelioration of the originally severe, and, in every respect, inefficient and impolitic enactments on the subject, makes such a detail necessary to a complete portraiture of his character.

Whoever examines into the religious opinions of the early Methodist ministers in America, will not be at a loss to discover a very strong and general hostility to the theory and practice of slaveholding. And when he recollects that the majority, and certainly the most influential, of these ministers were Englishmen, admirers

\* Of later times, and of the influence of the Abolitionists of the present day, the writer can speak with more confidence. It is unquestionable that these efforts have most seriously injured the cause of the slave in Virginia, and other states. Previous to 1831, the opinion that slavery was politically and socially an evil was very common. It was rare that an *apology* was attempted in its behalf. But the measures of Abolitionists at the North have learned us to search out reasons for its continuance, and arguments whereby we may justify and defend it. And it will require long years to recover the ground we have lost. Public opinion will not soon return to its views of the subject prior to the period above referred to.

and followers of Mr. Wesley, and subject to his authority; and then adds the fact, that in 1774, Mr. Wesley wrote and published his "Thoughts upon Slavery,"—he will need no additional evidence of the origin of this hostility; nor, when the strong words in which those "Thoughts" are clothed, is taken into the account, will he be surprised at its almost obstinate and exciting character. But, although cherishing these feelings of opposition to slavery, it was not until the Conference of 1780 that any formal measures were taken to extirpate it from the Societies. This may be owing to the circumstance, that previous to 1776 they had made very little progress in the Southern slaveholding states. And, as the first rule upon the subject had a specific application to the members of Conference, it may be that it was as late as 1780 before any Travelling Preacher became possessed of slaves; and hence the apparently late period of introducing it into the statute book of Methodism. But when it was recorded there, it was in language that might properly stand by the side of that which, as we have supposed, created, and gave energy and direction to their hostility. Still the rule was not absolute in its application to either the Preachers or the people. As it respects the Preachers, it stands as a matter concerning which the Conference was seeking to ascertain what was proper under the circumstances; and with regard to the people it expressed a distinct avowal of their opinions on the nature of slavery, and passed a censure of disapprobation upon every "friend" of Methodism that held slaves, and advised them all to let their slaves go free. But the law shall speak for itself.

"*Ques.* 16. Ought not this Conference to require those Travelling Preachers who hold slaves, to give promises to set them free?

"*Ans.* Yes.

"*Ques.* 17. Does this Conference acknowledge that slave-keeping is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society, contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours? Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom?

"*Ans.* Yes."\*

\* Minutes of Conference for the year 1780.

Such was the first official declaration of sentiments that had been accumulating for years; and it fell upon the surprised and pious feelings of the Societies as a spell, paralyzing their energies, and foretoking oppressive and impending evils. For the measure was as well calculated to irritate as to enlighten; and did as much in the way of creating disaffection as in correcting error.\* And it stands in the Minutes for the same year, as if to furnish a commentary upon the difficult and delicate position of the Conference, as a statutory duty of "the Assistant, to meet the negroes himself, and appoint as helpers in his absence, *proper white persons*, and not to *suffer them to stay late and meet by themselves*." A provision so full of meaning as almost to demonstrate the unsoundness and impropriety of the previous enactment.

The next enactment on the subject of slavery, stands in the Minutes for 1783, and has exclusive reference to Local Preachers. It is in these words:

"*Ques. 10.* What shall be done with our Local Preachers who hold slaves, contrary to the laws which authorize their freedom, in any of the United States?

"*Ans.* We will try them another year. In the mean time let every Assistant deal faithfully and plainly with every one, and report to the next Conference. It may then be necessary to suspend them."

Specific as is this rule, in its application to a class, there is an observable, and, to our apprehension, a commendable deference to public opinion; since it was restricted in its operation to those states in which, by Legislative action, an emancipated slave might enjoy freedom. And even here it was not to be considered absolute. Moral suasion was to be employed by the Assistant; and the Conference reserved to itself the right of ultimate decision in the matter.

In 1784, at the Conference held previous to the Christmas Conference, when the Church was organized, these Ecclesiastical proceedings against slavery reached their zenith, in the adoption of measures that must have dismembered Methodism, or left it a blighted and withered thing in fields whereon it had gained its richest triumphs. Each class, concerning whom action had been

\* Lee's History of the Methodists, p. 72.

previously taken, were now brought under the ban of the Conference; and slaveholding was to be eradicated from the soil of Methodism, as dust is wiped from the face of a mirror—as summarily, and with as little remorse. At this Conference the following rules seem to have been adopted as the final decision in the case:

*“Ques. 12. What shall we do with our friends that will buy and sell slaves?”*

*“Ans. If they buy with no other design than to hold them as slaves, and have been previously warned, they shall be turned out, and permitted to sell on no consideration.”*

*“Ques. 13. What shall we do with our Local Preachers who will not emancipate their slaves in those states where the laws admit it?”*

*“Ans. Try those in Virginia another year, and suspend the Preachers in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.”*

*“Ques. 22. What shall be done with our Travelling Preachers that now are, or hereafter shall be possessed of negroes, and refuse to manumit them where the law permits?”*

*“Ans. Employ them no more.”*

These rules, so explicit and summary, only required a detail of the plan upon which, if submitted to, they might be carried into execution; and, if rejected, that the process of expulsion might consummate the resolution of their authors to sever slavery, slaveholders, and slaves, from all connexion, dependence, and communion with Methodism. And this plan, in its objects and details, was matured and incorporated in the Discipline of the Church at the General Conference held in Baltimore in December 1784. Omitting only so much of the proceedings of this Conference as is embraced in previous quotations from former enactments, we give the whole as it stands in the printed Minutes, “Composing a Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and other members of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” put forth by the Christmas Conference.\* It is, perhaps, the more important to give this document

\* The full title is as follows: “Minutes of several Conversations between the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., the Rev. Francis Asbury, and others, at a Conference, begun in Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, on Monday, the 27th of December, in the year 1784. Composing a Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and other Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church

entire, since it is not to be found in any history of the Church that has fallen under the writer's notice. Mr. Lee, in his "History of the Methodists," only gives the "substance" of the enactment; and Dr. Bangs, in his "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church," only copies the account given by Mr. Lee. It is presumable he had not seen the Minutes of that Conference. The rule on slavery occurs on the 15th page, in answer to the forty-second question.

*"Ques. 42. What methods can we take to extirpate slavery?"*

*"Ans. We are deeply conscious of the impropriety of making new terms of communion for a religious society already established, excepting on the most pressing occasion; and such we esteem the practice of holding our fellow-creatures in slavery. We view it as contrary to the golden law of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the unalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the Revolution, to hold in the deepest debasement, in a more abject slavery than is perhaps to be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are all capable of the image of God.*

*"We, therefore, think it our most bounden duty to take immediately some effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us. And for that purpose we add the following to the rules of our Society, viz:*

*"1. Every member of our Society who has slaves in his possession, shall, within twelve months after notice given to him by the Assistant (which notice the Assistants are required immediately and without any delay, to give in their respective circuits), legally execute and record an instrument, whereby he emancipates and sets free every slave in his possession who is between the ages of forty and forty-five, immediately, or at farthest when they arrive at the age of forty-five:*

*"And every slave who is between the ages of twenty-five and forty, immediately, or at farthest at the expiration of five years from the date of the said instrument:*

in America. Philadelphia: Printed by Charles Cist, in Arch Street, the corner of Fourth Street, MDCCLXXXV." This first edition of the Discipline was published in the old form of question and answer. It has eighty-one questions. In 1787, it was divided into thirty-one sections, and published in a pamphlet of 48 pages, including the Index.

"And every slave who is between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, immediately, or at farthest when they arrive at the age of thirty :

"And every slave under the age of twenty, as soon as they arrive at the age of twenty-five, at farthest :

"And every infant born in slavery after the above-mentioned rules are complied with, immediately on its birth.

"2. Every Assistant shall keep a Journal, in which he shall regularly minute down the names and ages of all the slaves belonging to all the masters in his respective circuit, and also the date of every instrument executed and recorded for the manumission of the slaves, with the name of the court, book, and folio, in which the said instruments respectively shall have been recorded ; which Journal shall be handed down in each circuit to the succeeding Assistants.

"3. In consideration that these rules form a new Term of Communion, every person concerned, who will not comply with them, shall have liberty quietly to withdraw himself from our Society within the twelve months succeeding the notice given as aforesaid. Otherwise, the Assistant shall exclude him in the Society.

"4. No person so *voluntarily withdrawn*, or so *excluded*, shall ever partake of the Supper of the Lord with the Methodists, till he complies with the above requisitions.

"5. No person holding slaves shall, in future, be admitted into Society or to the Lord's Supper, till he previously complies with these rules concerning slavery.

"N. B. These rules are to affect the members of our Society no farther than as they are consistent with the laws of the states in which they reside.

"And respecting our Brethren in Virginia that are concerned, and after due consideration of their peculiar circumstances, we allow them *two years* from the notice given, to consider the expedience of compliance or non-compliance with these rules."

It is not the least objectionable feature of this new Term of Communion, that it was greatly in advance of public opinion upon a subject not certainly recognised as settled by the Word of God ; but it was subjecting the people to a surveillance no less oppressive to them, than it was beyond the legitimate province of ministerial



employment. And in its principles, as is evident from the exceptions at the close of the rules, it could not be general and impartial in its application. The exception, too, in favour of Virginia, shows that there were circumstances in existence that precluded its operation. These facts demonstrate the impolicy of the attempt to legislate for the Church, upon a subject over which Ecclesiastical bodies can exercise no control; and they ought to have foreclosed the whole proceedings. But there was something in the slavery of the times so utterly surpassing its most oppressive evils now,\* that their eager anxiety for its extinction, and their ineffectual efforts to promote it, may be vindicated upon grounds sufficiently comprehensive to preserve the purity of their motives, and to justify the adoption of any measures that, in their judgment, promised its removal. And signal as was the failure to accomplish any general emancipation, there can be no doubt but their honest and persevering efforts in behalf of the slaves, produced a very decided change in their social and moral condition, and left the sweet savour of a humane and pious influence, to work out its blessed consummation upon the public mind. Yet, it cannot be concealed that to the full extent of their own benevolent aims, there was no corresponding general sympathy with the Conference. Many of the Methodists were decidedly opposed to every attempt at legislation upon the subject. And the public mind was at all times easily and strongly excited by any interference with the matter. This was especially the case in Virginia; and hence, in consideration of "the peculiar circumstances" of the Societies in this state, the

\* The following fact, extracted from a tract on "Negro-Slavery," by the Rev. James O'Kelly, published in 1789, will illustrate this point. "I am more than astonished to hear those learned gentlemen, generally known by the appellation of *Clergy*, standing in the pulpit, and with lifted eyes praying, 'That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all prisoners and captives,' and the people answering, 'We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.' To which they have my *Amen*. In the evening, the Clerk stands at the door of the Lord's house of prayer, and with a loud voice proclaims, that such a gentleman's captive is absconded and is now outlawed. Liberty is hereby given to any man to kill the said slave for such transgression, besides \$1. reward." If Mr. O'Kelly was not mistaken in regard to this practice, we can easily conceive of a justification of the course of our fathers. But we do not find in any history of the times a corresponding statement. It seems fanciful.

Conference, by special enactment, granted them two years' exemption from the pains and penalties of this new Term of Communion.

It was precisely in this condition of things, when the Assistants had, under the direction of Conference, given publicity to the rules, and, in effect, proclaimed a truce upon the subject in Virginia, that Dr. Coke entered, and passed through, preaching with his peculiar warmth and energy upon the necessity of immediate emancipation. That he met with very little sympathy, and still less success in these efforts, can excite no surprise in a mind familiar with the opinions and feelings of the times. It is not intended to convey the idea that no slaves were emancipated. Some indeed, were; but his exhortations on the subject fell as ineffectually upon the congregations generally, as flattery upon "the dull cold ear of death;" except in so far as they excited the indignation of the ungodly, and succeeded in bringing the members of the Church under the suspicion of encouraging measures, which, to the public mind, were fraught with domestic injury and social ruin. It deserves, however, to be stated, and it must be set down to the credit of Dr. Coke, that on entering the state of North Carolina, he abstained from all public introduction of the subject of emancipation—"the laws of this state," to use his own language, "forbidding any to free their negroes." This was a prudent submission to the sovereignty of State authority over all within its jurisdiction, as well as to an important religious principle that was incorporated into the Discipline as an article of religious belief, and made obligatory upon every one to whom the authority and functions of the ministry were intrusted. But when, in the course of Conference business, the subject of slavery, in connexion with the recent legislation of the General Conference, was introduced, he could no longer hold his peace. He must bear his "testimony against slavery;" and that testimony had no soft and mincing words with which to garnish over a condition of things which he regarded as an intolerable, uncompounded evil. To what extent his views were received with favour by the Conference, cannot be determined. That many did not sympathize with him is quite probable; and that one entertained opinions, and stood up with honest confidence to express them, in direct opposition to those he so long had cherished, and now sought so ardently to fasten upon the body to influence its decisions,

and for the government of its future actions, is a matter of history already brought before the notice of the reader.

Between Mr. Lee and Dr. Coke, there was, in many respects, a perfect contrast. The one was deliberate, calculating, and persevering; the other ardent, impulsive, and energetic. But both were honest, pious, and warm-hearted. On the subject of slavery, if they could have stood side by side, upon a point of observation remote from all its connexions and dependencies, and examined it as a theory of life, with its social relations, separated from all the circumstances that have interwoven it into the very texture of the body politic, it is not improbable but they would have united to denounce and oppose it. But when brought into its presence, and compelled to estimate its character by facts; to compare slavery in America and in their own times, with slavery everywhere, and in all ages of the world; to measure it not by the standards that prejudice and poetry have set up, but by those of reason and common sense; to weigh it, not as it may preponderate in the scale of religious sensibility, when an inflammatory appeal has thrown the whole moral nature into commotion, but when justice sits on the beam, and charity and truth adjust the balances, and then, in the midst of all its circumstances, cognizant of all its relations, and in view of all its effects, force them to decide the question of emancipation, and the one would be transformed into stone, the other to flame. To Dr. Coke, slavery had but one aspect: It was a doom to work, without compensation, other than necessary food and raiment, shelter and protection; it was the doom of ignorance and degradation, where the sunlight of education never, and that of religion seldom penetrated. In every respect it was, to his mind, an evil and bitter thing. And, in the estimation of Mr. Lee, it was not a whit better. But it was not the *nature* of slavery that caused the difference between these men of God. It was the question of emancipation. They agreed as to the evil; they differed as to the measure for its removal. Mr. Lee regarded the whole Ecclesiastical proceedings in the premises as ill timed; and without questioning the pure intentions of those concerned in these measures for the extirpation of slavery, he nevertheless considered the whole as extrajudicial, and calculated to excite the strong prejudices of an interested and resisting community against those engaged in the

crusade against slavery. And in the discussion of the subject in the Conference, he took the broad and sure ground, that all Ecclesiastical legislation upon the subject was inexpedient, and would prove unprofitable and injurious. He had grown up in the midst of slavery, and he was familiar with its political, social, and moral depravations, and he deplored them all. But he knew the opinions and feelings of those against whom these measures were directed, and he forewarned the Conference against stirring up the wrath and indignation of community by pressing rules demanding the Methodists to emancipate their slaves. There were two general grounds upon which he opposed the attempt to carry into practice the rules and provisions of the General Conference. The *first* was, that if the Preachers continued to press the subject of emancipation upon the people, that they, not now in favour of it, would be roused to resist the interference with their civil rights and interests, and that it would induce such general opposition as to prejudice the interests of the slave, and preclude any future attempts at emancipation, even under circumstances that might seem to be more promising. The *second* was drawn from the injurious effects these measures were already producing upon the religious interests of the people. The measures had already brought about strifes and debates, where, heretofore, all was concord. It had separated between brethren, alienated the ministers from each other, and the people from their pastors, and was rapidly spreading, like a plague-spot, through all the ramifications of society. Under these circumstances, he thought the Church ought to pause in the course it had adopted, and hereafter to pursue a line of action less exciting, and more calm, deliberate, and conciliating.

These were the honest sentiments of Mr. Lee; and they were expressed with a fearless independence that then, as at every subsequent period of his life, desired no concealment, as it dreaded no opposition; and, judging from the effect, they must have made a powerful impression upon the mind of Dr. Coke. But it was not a favourable one for the young minister. Either from the nature of the remarks, or the manner of expressing them, or all together, the Doctor conceived that Mr. Lee was opposed to the rules of the General Conference, for reasons that amounted to a justification of slavery; and his opposition was construed into a defence

of the lawfulness of slaveholding. And, as he could not conceive how any friend of religion could support a system so full of enormity, in his judgment, he urged it as an objection to the passage of Mr. Lee's character. To this allegation he promptly replied; and while engaged in vindicating himself from the injustice of the accusation, he was interrupted by his opponent in a manner so imperious and rude, that his Virginia blood was sent bounding to the extremities of his system; and feelings were engendered, and words were uttered by both, that a Christian can truly regret, but may not defend. But, if Mr. Lee was ill at ease, the Doctor was not entirely at rest. He discovered that he had erred in the accusation and the interruption, and, with a frankness peculiar to himself, he apologized for his conduct, and peace and kindly feelings were soon restored.

Subsequent events proved the correctness of the ground taken by Mr. Lee, on the subject of emancipation. The existence of the rules was short; their influence, in strengthening the bonds of the slave, and in counteracting the influence of Methodism, especially in Virginia, was of longer duration. But, coincident with the scene just described, the opposition to the "new Term of Communion" became so general and decided, that at the Conference held in Baltimore, in June 1785, just six months after it was adopted, the ministers were authorized "to suspend the execution of the Minute on Slavery, till the deliberation of a future Conference; and that an equal space of time be allowed all our members for consideration, when the Minute shall be put in force." Yet they still denounced the system in language of unabated hostility. Affixed to the Minute, suspending the operation of these rules, is the following declaration of their unalterable determination respecting slavery: "We do hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means." In this avowal of their opinion concerning slavery, and in the resolution to seek its destruction, especially while confining themselves to such measures as coincided with the words they used, they were not transcending the just limits of ministerial action. And, considering the position occupied by this resolution in the history of these Ecclesiastical proceedings, it is equivalent to a declaration of the impolicy and imprudence of all previous enact-

ments against slavery. Whoever carefully looks into these proceedings, and compares the state of the Church during the excitement they produced, with what it was in previous years, and in the period immediately succeeding the suspension of the rules, and the cessation of active measures, will find no reason to doubt but wiser counsels, and stronger and better influences, were guiding the decisions of the Conference. It was a happy hour for the Church when, under the guidance of Him who is "Head over all things to the Church," she paused in the midst of her course, and retraced her steps to the more peaceable and lawful pursuits of her heavenly calling. The mission of the ministry is for the redemption of souls. In Christ, "there is neither bond nor free;" and in the work of the ministry, as authorized by Him, there is no recognition of any such distinction. All are one *in* Christ, and one to his servants. It were as wise and lawful to preach against female subjection to "the head of the woman," as to preach against the relation of master and slave. Efforts for emancipation in the one case, would be as lawful as they are in the other. If the *evils* of slavery form the ground of apology, or even of justification, for the crusade, are there not evils, if fewer in number, at least as commanding in magnitude, and as worthy of sympathy, in the subordinate relations of woman? As a wife, in many civilized governments, she is as nearly destitute of civil existence as a slave. And, in most of the countries in which Christianity was planted by the Apostles, in what important respects did the condition of females differ from that of a slave in Virginia, in 1785? And yet, in those very countries, slavery in its most frightful form was universal. But, in neither case did the Apostles proscribe the superior, or attempt to abolish the relation. The very reverse of this was the course they chose to pursue. They recognised the existence of all such conditions, as a part of a universal system, developing, as it was originated and preserved by, the wisdom of God; and they defined its separate relations, and prescribed its positive duties. Herein they followed the example of Christ; and the Christian ministry ought to "follow them as they followed Him." Neither Christ nor the Apostles interfered with the relations existing between masters and slaves. These were regulated by civil legislation,—prescribing their rank and powers, their rights and duties.

These laws were formed by authorities ordained of God; and subjection to this authority was a Christian duty. The Apostles, therefore, did all that pertained to their ministry, when they recognised these different relations as equally binding, and mutually dependent upon each other in the great system of Providence; prescribed a class of duties appropriate to each, and promotive of the general good of the whole; and, leaving religion in its humanizing and sanctifying influences to change, modify, and, finally, if so it be the will of God, to destroy all such distinctions, they busied themselves to bring both to a participation of the blessings of the gospel, that they might be one in the unity of a common salvation, and in the fellowship of a holy love. Beyond this point no Ecclesiastical body, desirous of confining itself to "wise and prudent means" for the emancipation of slavery, can go, without impairing its usefulness, or compromising the object it aims to promote. While labouring to bring both master and slave under the subduing and transforming power of the gospel of peace, the ministry is co-working with God, in the legitimate field of its commission. But when, upon any pretence, or for any cause, not explicitly defined in the Word of God as sinful, it enters into collision with civil institutions, attempts to break down long-established conditions of society, or interferes with legal rights and just authority, there can be little doubt but it has passed out of the sphere of its legitimate operations, and surrendered, a sacrifice to infatuation, that unction of holiness wherewith God had consecrated it for the glory of His name, and the redemption of souls. It is due, however, to our fathers, to say that their measures were aimed at emancipation in the Church. It was reserved for our times to outrage the ministerial character by a presumptuous interference with civil institutions and state sovereignty.

It would be improper, greatly as these remarks have been extended, to pass from the consideration of the subject without introducing a brief notice of the pervading characteristic of these Ecclesiastical proceedings. In conception, object, and action, they were in perfect contrast with the measures of modern Abolitionism. In the maturity of their principles and plans the doctrine of Abolition had no place. Their knowledge of slavery, for they were familiar with every type and colour of the evil, constrained them to exer-

cise a caution that, otherwise, they would have thrown to the winds, in their anxiety to accomplish a cherished object. Their theory for the extirpation of slavery in America was that of gradual emancipation, not of immediate abolition. The modern word, as the modern idea, did not belong to their vocabulary. And the fact, that they had respect, in all their proceedings, to the legal obstacles in the way of emancipation, and consulted the civil relations of the Societies, by providing exceptions suited to the state of the case, shows as wide a difference between their measures and those now urged, as there is, also, in the latter a grievous departure from the dignity of their councils and the moderation of their spirit. Nor does the contrast terminate here. The fathers of American Methodism, firm as they were in their opposition to slavery, had no denunciations to utter against those who differed with them in opinion, or questioned the propriety of their proceedings. They were opposed to slavery, but they did not define it as an evil, and then denounce all connected with it as sinners. Hatred for the master was not the proof they furnished of love for the slave. Moral suasion was the force they employed, and truth and justice for the master were moral duties as imperatively demanded, and as cheerfully awarded, as sympathy for the slave and effort for his freedom. The erection of slaveholding into a disqualification for Church membership was the last resort of despair in the breast of good men who had wasted their energy and exhausted their ingenuity in the enterprise of emancipation. And its early abandonment is a proof at once of their humility, and of the surrender of the last vestige of hope to accomplish the extirpation of slavery by any Ecclesiastical measures whatever. Slavery was too strong for Methodism in 1784, and it will foil it in 1848! But it will succumb to the power of the gospel of Christ. Its doom is written, but "the time is not yet." It will retire before the Christianity of the nineteenth century, as the dew-drop that sparkles and dies in the morning blaze.

As it is a part of our Ecclesiastical action on the subject of slavery, and as the subject may not be noticed at any great length in the succeeding pages of this work, it will not be amiss to close our present history of the matter by stating that, notwithstanding the suspension of the rules of the Christmas Conference, the Church was not entirely free from agitation for several years subsequent to



1785. The agitation, however, seems to have been withdrawn from the pulpit; and the press was employed, by those individuals not willing to retire entirely from the arena of strife, for the purpose of spreading doctrines that the Church had ceased to promulge. Pamphlets, various in style and merit, were published and circulated to enlighten the public mind, and interest the pious heart in the importance of emancipation. Two of these are now lying before me. The one bears the running title of "An Essay on Negro Slavery. By James O'Kelly, Philadelphia, 1789." But it is bound up with another, bearing the same title, but signed "Othello," and dated, "Maryland, May 23, 1788." Another is entitled, "A Dialogue between Do-Justice and Professing Christian. Dedicated to the respective and collective Abolition Societies, and to all other benevolent, humane philanthropists in America. By Freeborn Garrettson, Minister of the Gospel, Wilmington." It has no date, and no clue to the discovery of the time when it was issued. Others were doubtless published. There is also a reply, in MS., in our possession, to an unknown pamphlet, in the handwriting of Mr. Lee, and signed, "Your Loving Antagonist." It is not necessary to enter into any statement of the line of argument advanced in these essays. Their designs were good, and their authors were alike honest and pure-minded. That they met with so little success is to be attributed to the state of the times, rather than to any want of zeal in the cause. They have long ceased from their works, and entered into rest; and we may mingle our veneration for the robust and manly virtues of our fathers, with our prayers that a cause to which they gave so much of their faithful diligence, may, ere long, find its consummation in that greater freedom of soul wherewith Christ makes his people free.

It is a matter that every one, who undertakes to examine the early periods of American Methodist history, will find sufficient reason to regret, that scarcely any other distinctions than those of time and place were regarded in the Conferences held previous to the year 1790. It was not until the year 1802, that the Conferences were entered on the Minutes in separate form, and then the whole work, extending from Canada to Georgia, was included in seven Conferences. In 1785 the general work was divided into separate districts under the supervision of Elders; in 1797, the

term *Presiding Elder* was introduced into the Minutes, and in 1801 distinctive names were given to districts. In 1798, in reporting the numbers in society, the returns were given for each state, and in 1786 the custom of reporting in separate columns the "whites and blacks" was introduced. The want of Conference lines, especially at the period we are now considering, makes it extremely difficult to ascertain, with any measure of certainty or satisfaction, the ministers belonging to a Conference, or the success that may have crowned their efforts in any given year. These, it is true, are not very important matters, but they preclude accuracy in ascertaining the relative growth of Methodism in a given district, and forestal every attempt to settle difficulties that continually arise in the path of the historian. The general inattention to such things on the part of those who planted Methodism in the fruitful soil of America furnishes a beautiful proof of their self-denying devotedness to God. They were toiling for the present salvation of dying men, and not building a monument to their own glory, or for the admiration of posterity. Duty, not honour, and present good, not future praise, was the great impulse that caused and guided their movements.

Ten days after the close of the North Carolina Conference, that of Virginia commenced, at Conference Chapel, Brunswick county, Va., according to the Minutes of 1784; but at the house of Mr. William Mason, according to Coke, Asbury, and Lee. Here about twenty ministers assembled, and a part of the time they all ate and slept at the same house. Mr. Lee was present during the session. Within the Conference district about two hundred had been added to the Church, notwithstanding the agitation of the Societies on the subject of slavery. The excitement produced by the rules of the General Conference was reaching its crisis. The accounts given of the transactions of this Conference respecting slavery, in the Journals of Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury, brief as they are, furnish a mortifying exhibition of the power of prejudice in the breasts of good men. The former says: "A great many principal friends met us here to insist on a repeal of our slave rules; but when they found that we had thoughts of withdrawing ourselves entirely from that circuit, on account of the violent spirit of some leading men, they drew in their horns, and sent us a very humble letter, entreat-

ing that Preachers might be appointed for their circuit."\* The latter remarks: "I found the minds of the people greatly agitated with our rules against slavery, and a proposed petition to the General Assembly for the emancipation of the blacks. Colonel — and Dr. Coke disputed on the subject, and the Colonel used some threats; next day, Brother O'Kelly let fly at them, and they were made angry enough."† The "proposed petition" was carried through the Conference, but, it is believed, it never reached the Legislature; and, like many a previous enactment upon the same subject, it remained a dead letter upon the statute book of Methodism. But how humiliating is the exhibition of the contest between the clergy and the people; portrayed in the brief extracts we have given from two men whose moral worth is beyond all praise. A continued repetition of such scenes as were becoming common in the Conference room, a few years longer, would have despoiled Methodism of every green thing in its heritage; and left it, shorn of its locks, a prey to the spoiler. But in this contest the people triumphed. The great and increasing difficulties in the way of emancipation could not be overlooked by the ministers.‡ Nor were they ineffectual. The Conference, with a magnanimity that good men only could exercise, paused in their course, suspended their rules, returned with renewed interest and energy to their appropriate work, and the wheels of Zion were taken out of the miry clay, and placed upon a rock. Methodism was established in the land, and a door of entrance to the hearts of multitudes was thrown wide open in the path of the Itinerant.

Notwithstanding the difference between Mr. Lee and the Conference on the subject of slavery, there was a cordial unity of feeling between him and Bishop Asbury. This may have been produced, in some measure, by a contrast of character that, subdued and checked by religion, had the effect to relieve and modify what was discrepant in each. Bishop Asbury was possessed of a disposition always serious, with a slight tendency to depression. Mr. Lee was

\* Coke's Journal—Sunday, May 1-4, 1785.

† Asbury's Journal, vol. i. p. 384.

‡ Dr. Coke, Journal, under date of June 1, 1785, says: "We thought it prudent to suspend the Minute concerning slavery for one year, on account of the great opposition that had been given to it, especially in the new circuits."

always cheerful and happy. It was, perhaps, principally owing to this unmixed good nature of Mr. Lee, and his singular power of transfusing the calm of his own feelings into the bosom of others, that caused Bishop Asbury to record, in his Journal, during their travel together to Charleston, previously noticed, the sentence—"I was comfortable in Brother Lee's company." It was probably for comfortable companionship, or to bring him into a more extended sphere of usefulness that the Bishop desired Mr. Lee to accompany him to the Conference to be held in Baltimore. Except the suspension of the rule on slavery, and the expulsion from the ministry of one who for ten years had sustained a fair reputation in the Church of God; we do not find, in any record of the times, that the proceedings were possessed of a more than ordinary character. It is true, the plans for the erection of Cokesbury College were brought to maturity; the site determined upon, and the ground purchased, and perhaps the buildings planned and contracted for; and the whole measure arranged for rearing an institution that it was fondly hoped would stand up in centuries to come, a monument of the zeal of Methodism, and a blessing to the world. But God's ways are not our ways. In a few years the edifice was destroyed by fire; and the whole plan ultimately abolished. In another connexion we may perhaps have more to say on this subject.

At the close of this Conference, Dr. Coke returned to England, after having spent exactly seven months in the country. During this period he was *in labours abundant*. Having fulfilled the great object of his mission in organizing the Church according to the plan drawn up by Mr. Wesley, and travelled extensively through the states in which Methodism was blessed with so many of the first fruits of its gracious training, a witness of the favourable reception everywhere given to the new organization, and of its admirable adaptation to the moral and spiritual condition of the people, he returned to gladden the heart of Mr. Wesley by a report of the cordial adoption of his measures, and of the entire success with which his mission had been crowned. Soon after his return to England he published his Journal, some portions of which, when republished in this country, gave very considerable offence to individuals. But it contained a confession of his error in preaching against slavery in Virginia, as it was a civil institution established

by law.\* A discovery that, if it had been made at an earlier period, and allowed to regulate his practice, would have made his ministry far more successful in its true sphere while here, and have left upon the public mind a holier savour when gone.

During his presence at the Conference in Baltimore, Mr. Lee was sedulous in cultivating the soil of his own heart. He knew the importance, to ministerial happiness and efficiency, of keeping his heart in the knowledge and love of God. And he sought under all circumstances to have *the testimony of a good conscience*. In the public worship of the Sanctuary he felt himself in *the house of God*, and he strove to make it *the gate of heaven* to his soul. And in the closet, by diligent and prayerful self-examination, he searched the depths of his soul to see if there was *any evil way in him*. At the close of each day, he was accustomed to hold converse with his heart: "I say to myself," he records in his Journal,

'Soul, where hast thou gleaned to-day?  
Thy labours how bestowed?  
What hast thou rightly said or done?  
What grace obtained or knowledge won  
In following after God!'

Such attention to his spiritual interests leave no ground for surprise at the cheerful and happy temper with which he met the trials and allotments of life.

The Caroline circuit on which Mr. Lee was appointed to labour, for the year 1785, was within the limits of the Baltimore Conference. He preached to the people of his charge early in July, having been detained in the city, a short time after the adjournment of Conference, by indisposition occasioned by inoculation for the small pox. Having entered upon his duties for the year, he gave his "faithful diligence to serve God for the promoting of His glory, and the edifying of His people." The following extracts from his Journal will serve to show the state of his own mind in the work, and the effect of his ministry upon the minds of others.

"Monday, July 4th. This evening I enjoyed the presence of the Lord, and could but bless His Name that he ever called me to seek His face: for two days I have felt willing to undergo any-

\* Hist. Methodists, p. 190.

thing for the Lord, that He shall permit. I have been reading Madam Guion's Life; and seeing what she suffered, and how patiently she bore all things for the sake of Christ, it has caused me to pray fervently that I might be brought also to suffer cheerfully and joyfully whatever cross I might have to bear."

The next day after preaching, at a place called Charles', and enjoying the comfortable communion of the Holy Ghost, he gives utterance to the strong desire of his heart for the full salvation of God. "Blessed be God, that He does look upon the low estate of His servant. I have little to say to any one of late, except on religious matters. I feel my heart much detached from the world, and a constant breathing after holiness. O, when will the time arrive when I shall be filled with all the fulness of God?"

"Sunday, 10th. At the Fork Meeting-House, I preached with a good deal of life and liberty from Col. iii. 3, 4. I felt very much for the people; and some of them I hope felt for themselves; their tears proved that they felt the word. When I preach and can see that the people are affected, then I am contented; but how hard it is for me to be satisfied, when I see no visible stir among the hearers. For several days, I have felt much deadness to the world. This morning I met the coloured class, and was greatly comforted among them: I was astonished to hear them speak as much to the purpose as they did; they were dressed very decently. I could not doubt but they were seeking the things which are above.

"Saturday, October 1st. At Smith's I preached from Gal. v. 1: *Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.* I bless the Lord this was a day of liberty to me; while I was speaking my soul was lost in wonder, love, and praise, and I could but call upon my soul to bless the Lord. I seemed to be swallowed up in the will of the Lord. I hope the word reached the hearts of the hearers. I know that my care of the people does not lie altogether in preaching to them; I have now begun to press home family duties, the necessity of family religion. I desire to teach the people all things necessary for life and salvation. O my God! if thou hast sent me among this people, bless my labours, and let me see the work of the Lord revive; and feel it revive in my own heart. Lord answer my request!

"Sunday, 2d. Fork Meeting-House. My text was Colossians iv. 2 : *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.* This was a time of refreshing from the Lord ! O my soul ! bless the name of the Lord, for He has dealt bountifully with me. I spoke almost two hours, and the hearers were dissolved in tears. I now see that the Lord does not cast off for ever. Though heaviness endures for a night, yet joy comes in the morning. Then I met the class and gave them an exhortation with respect to bringing up their families, and how to live and act one with another.

"Sunday, 16th. - I rose this morning very unwell, and set out to town, which was a mile off, before the stars withdrew their shining. I preached at the Court-House at sun rising, 1 John iii. 1, 2 : *Behold, what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! &c.* Though I was unwell this morning, I spoke with a good deal of comfort, to many hearers. I had reason to believe that the word reached some of their hearts. As this was an unusual hour for preaching in this part of the world, some expected to see or hear great things, and for fear of being too late, they hardly slept any on the preceding night."

The prayers so earnestly offered by Mr. Lee for the revival of the work of the Lord, were not altogether in vain. His labours on a circuit were always directed with special reference to the promotion of religious awakening. In the pulpit and class-room he sought to prepare the people to meet God ; and in the social circle it was a constant practice to endeavour to carry out the principles more publicly insisted upon, and thereby "confirm and strengthen, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth," those over whose spiritual welfare he was the Lord's watchman. He knew that the Church must be alive to the cause of religion, zealous for God, and in travail for the souls of the people, before there could be any just expectation of a gracious general effusion of the Spirit. The minister's heart might be like Gideon's fleece, and the Church be like the dry and parched earth around it. Hence, in all his labours, he aimed to impress upon the minds of his hearers the necessity of putting religious principles to the test by bringing them to operate upon the private engagements of life. He desired to see family religion exercising the full measure of its influence in training its

members for usefulness in the Church of God. And, perhaps, few agencies are more powerful in promoting a just sense of responsibility, and preserving a proper tone of religious feeling in the Church of God, than family prayer when regularly and properly conducted. Mr. Lee was fully aware of the moral influence of a holy family altar. He had been trained under it. And it is not surprising to witness his zeal to bring all who were under his ministerial oversight, under the same hallowing and subduing influences. Nor will it be considered strange that such efforts, faithfully continued, were happily instrumental in awakening the Church to cordial unity of spirit in the work of religion. The power of God was present in the assembly of His people, and sinners were converted from the error of their ways. The pleasure of the Lord prospered in the hands of His servant; the Church was increased; and the people of God walked in singleness of heart, and in love one for another. The failure to report the numbers in Society in the different circuits, in 1785, already referred to, precludes correctness in stating the increase of the circuit during the time he laboured on it. In 1784, there were 752 members in Society in the Caroline circuit; and in 1786, there were, "Whites 657, blacks 243," making a total of 900, and showing an increase of 148 in two years. How many of these were brought under the hallowing influence of religion through the ministry of Mr. Lee, we have no means of ascertaining; nor is it of importance, any further than as success in winning souls to Christ furnishes proof of being called of God to the work of preaching repentance and remission of sins.

Mr. Lee continued his labours in the Caroline circuit until March 1786, and on the 10th of April attended the session of the Virginia Conference, at Lane's Chapel in Sussex county.\* At this Conference, two ministers, among the first who travelled in Virginia, Edward Dromgoole and William Glendenning, "desisted from travelling." The latter had evinced symptoms of mental derangement some time previously, and had ceased from preaching nearly a year. Mr. Lee, *History of the Methodists*, p. 122, gives a few extracts from "The Life of William Glendenning," written by him-

\* Dr. Bangs, in his *History of the M. E. Church*, by a singular mistake, says this Conference was held at Jones' Chapel, and on the 18th of April.



self, which fully prove the loss of reason, or a withdrawal of spiritual influence so complete and awful as to leave the whole mental and moral nature a blighted and melancholy wreck. The loss of spiritual enjoyment was the commencement of a moral disorder, that superinduced impatience of temper, and terminated in horrid blasphemy. Such was the awful end of one who did run well for a season. Who shall say whether the whole was the effect of natural or moral disorder? How deceitful is sin! Secret sin may have proved the ruin of this man. Who can tell!

It may also be mentioned as a matter of importance, that during the Conference at Lane's, a statement was made respecting the spiritual condition of Georgia; and volunteers were called for to carry the gospel into that destitute region. And such was the missionary spirit pervading the breasts of those devoted men, that more offered themselves than could be spared from the work in Virginia. Only two could be allowed to go; and these, Thomas Humphries and John Major, went forth in the name of the Lord, and formed a circuit on the Savannah River. Their labours were crowned with glorious success; and at the close of the year they reported an accession of 450 members to the Church.

After the adjournment of Conference, which only continued two days, Mr. Lee returned to Maryland, and on the 8th of May attended the Baltimore Conference at Abingdon.\* Of this Conference, Bishop Asbury says, "Love, candour, and precision, marked our deliberations;" a statement not more comprehensive respecting the perfect propriety of their deliberations, than it is unintelligible as to the subject matter of them. Beyond this we can find no certain record of its proceedings. There is one fact, however, stated in the Minutes, that so perfectly reflects the brotherly identity of the fathers of our Church, that it may be fitly introduced as an indication of the spirit of the times. One of their members, Jeremiah Lambert, had departed this life, and the Conference appropriated fourteen pounds to defray his funeral expenses. As this amount was taken from "the yearly collection towards supplying the deficiencies of the Preachers," it shows their

\* Dr. Bangs (see History), and the Minutes, say this Conference was held in Baltimore. But Lee, in his Journal, and Bishop Asbury, Journal, vol. i. p. 397, say Abingdon. We have followed these in the text.

generous magnanimity in yielding their own claims to satisfy the demands of such an exigency.

At this Conference, Mr. Lee was eligible to Deacon's orders. But, after duly weighing the matter, and for reasons satisfactory to his own mind, he declined entering into orders. What peculiar reasons operated to produce such a decision in his mind, we have no means of ascertaining. A careful consideration of his character for independence of opinion, and his steady purpose to follow the dictates of conscience in all things, in connexion with his strong attachment—the effect of sincere approbation—to Methodism in its Ecclesiastical organization, as well as its doctrines and moral discipline, precludes all suspicion of any reason that did not centre in his own sense of unfitness for the office. In 1788, at the Conference in Baltimore, he was urgently importuned to forego his opposition, and conform to the regulations of the Church. During the same year, at the Conference in Philadelphia, Bishop Asbury, sensible of the need of ordained ministers, and anxious to have the services of Mr. Lee in a more enlarged sphere of usefulness, and, perhaps, regarding him as being governed by prejudice, undertook to remonstrate with him. But he was immoveable; he thought it better for himself and the Church to remain without orders. Mr. Thrift, in his Memoirs, and with a knowledge derived from personal intimacy, as well as the Journals of Mr. Lee, says: "There is not the least shadow of reason to believe that he at all doubted the validity of our ordination. He was not among that number who contended for a succession of Episcopal ordination from the Bishop of Rome, or that believed it could only be validly done by a Bishop of the Established Church of England. He believed in none of these unsupported and antiquated doctrines. Neither did he censure others for receiving the holy office; because he was willing that 'every one should be fully persuaded in his own mind,' as this was the course which he was determined to pursue himself. And although his refusal to receive orders might have the appearance of obstinacy, to those who were not acquainted with his real motives, yet we are by no means disposed to attribute it to this cause. Motives of interest alone might have had some influence on the minds of individuals, to induce them to step into orders, when so repeatedly solicited by

the Church; but motives like these weighed nothing with Mr. Lee; for even when it was proposed in the Conference at Philadelphia, that Ministers should receive a small compensation for celebrating the rites of matrimony, he opposed it with all his might. In this respect he might have erred; but, judging from the tenor of his life, we are bold to say that it was his most decided opinion at that time, that such a course should be pursued." This forms a sufficient vindication of the purity of his motives, although it still leaves us ignorant of the reasons by which he was actuated.

The field of labour which it was the lot of Mr. Lee to cultivate during the year 1786, was Kent circuit, in the state of Maryland. The Conference adjourned on the 10th, and two days thereafter he preached his first sermon to the people of his charge. He entered upon the duties of his holy calling with a more intense concern for the conversion of sinners. The brief extracts from his Journal will show that his own soul was vigorous and ardent in the pursuit of the true riches; and also, that he was animated by a truly Christian spirit, in his efforts to promote the spiritual improvement of the people. His soul was greatly enlarged with love for God, and zeal for those over whom he had the spiritual oversight. He was abundant in labours; and his success in bringing souls to fellowship with Christ, was great and joyous.

"Sunday, May 14th, 1786. At Chester Town, I preached from 1 Thess. v. 19: *Quench not the Spirit*. I showed, I. The many ways in which the Spirit of God operates upon the hearts of the people. II. How the Spirit may be quenched. III. The consequence of quenching the Spirit. IV. The blessed effects which will ensue, if we quench it not. I felt my soul quickened while speaking to the people—I find my heart much drawn out in prayer to God in their behalf. O! may I have cause to bless God that my lot was cast amongst this people. There is nothing in the world I want to see so much as a revival of religion. O, may I feel as well as see it!

"Monday, 29th. At Plummer's, I preached from Dan. vi. 16: *Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee*. As soon as I began to sing, I felt my soul happy in the Lord, and, while I was praying, the power of the Lord was sensibly felt in

the midst ; but, while I was speaking from the text, the Lord was more powerfully present. There was weeping on every side, both among saints and sinners. Blessed be God ! it was a precious time to me ; I can truly say that I sowed in hope this day. It was the most powerful day I have seen in the circuit.

“ Sunday, June 11th. Chester Town, 10 o'clock, I endeavoured to show the nature, necessity, and effects of prayer, from 1 Thess. v. 17. Towards the latter part of the discourse, the poor hearers were quite overcome, and weeping was heard in every part of the house. I felt such a love for the people, and such a desire for their salvation, that my heart seemed ready to break. At length, my tears prevented utterance, and I stopped for a few moments, and then resumed my discourse. O, what a time it was among the people ! There was scarcely a dry eye in the house. Some of the most *dressy* people shook, being deeply affected with the word which reached their hearts. If I never have the comfort of seeing these people brought to the Lord, I think I have had the comfort of seeing them cut to the heart, under the word. The Lord has been good to me this day. I felt great peace in my soul after the meeting was over.

“ This morning I met the black class, visited a sick person, and then went and visited the prisoners before preaching. I know my moments are very precious, and it is a great pity that I should let so many pass away unimproved. After dinner, we rode down to the Old Chapel, and, at four o'clock, I preached from 1 Tim. ii. 4 : *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* I felt a degree of liberty in speaking. The people were much affected. I had a pleasing view while I was speaking, of the willingness of God to save all men. I am sure I felt willing to spare no pains in teaching them the way to be saved. I bless the Lord that he does not leave me without some comfort. I feel still determined to pursue my course, though death and hell obstruct my way. This night I went to bed in peace.

“ Saturday, July 8th. I met the children at Chester Town, for the first time. I have been convinced in my own mind, ever since I came to this circuit, that it would be of great advantage to the children to meet them here as in other places. I had no cause to doubt it, after our first meeting. At 3 o'clock, I met the women's

class ; and I believe they could all say it was good to be there. I felt myself happy amongst them ; and the greater part of the class was in tears. This is the first time the men and women have been met apart since I divided the class. I think the class increases in grace as well as in number.

"Thursday, 12th October," he thus writes : "We had a melting time in class-meeting, at Woodland's. It was a time of great comfort ; some, when spoken to, could only answer with their tears. There was an elderly woman, with her two daughters, who staid in, and desired to join Society. When they made the offer, many of the friends wept aloud for joy ; for joy hath tears as well as grief. I opened the Hymn Book, and gave out the following words :

' Who are these who come from far !  
Swifter than the flying cloud ;  
Thick as flocking doves they are,  
Eager in pursuit of God.

Trembling as the storm draws nigh,  
Hast'ning to their place of rest ;  
See them to the windows fly,  
To the ark of Jesus' breast.'

"I think this day I felt a resolution to give my all to God ; I have but two mites, and I now cast them into the Lord's treasury. O, my God ! I have no better sacrifice to make—wilt thou accept my soul and my body ? They are thine—thou hast given them to me, and now I render them back to thee, and keep back no part of the price. O, my soul ! bless God ; and forget not all His benefits."

The circuit on which Mr. Lee was thus toiling with so much usefulness to the Church, and so much profit to his own soul, was one of the first that was formed in America. And like most of the circuits of the times, it was by no means a small one, either in the ground it covered, or the number of appointments it contained. Its territory included Kent, Cecil, Caroline, and Queen Anne counties ; and in four weeks he had to preach thirty-one times and meet fifty-two classes—an amount of labour that left but little leisure on his hands. Still, he toiled on, setting the weather and fatigue at defiance ; and, even in sickness, he persevered in attend-

ing his engagements. He had given himself—soul, body and spirit—to the Lord; and he could keep back no part of the offering. Constant as was the demand upon his time and strength, he scrupulously fulfilled all that the state of the circuit, or the awakened concern of the people, required of him. *In all labour there is profit.* The truth of this remark was happily realized by Mr. Lee, both with regard to his personal pleasure in working for Christ, and with regard to the success with which his ministry was crowned. While he was on the circuit, three hundred were added to the Societies. Many more, it is probable, had been brought into the Kingdom of Christ; but, as has always been the case, some sought Christian fellowship elsewhere, and others returned to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. During the year, and in nearly every part of the connexion, there was a gracious revival of religion. God was increasing the faith of His people, and multiplying the number of those that believe in His name. And thereby preparing the Church for those gracious displays of Divine power and grace that, during several years immediately succeeding, filled the country with astonishment and the Church with redeemed and rejoicing converts.

On the 30th of March, 1787, Mr. Lee took leave of his people, and repaired to Conference. It was a season of deep and solemn interest. The gracious revival in which they had been engaged, their endeared social intercourse, and their strong and ardent sympathy, quickened by a joyous experience of the things of God, made them truly reluctant to separate. But submission to the appointments of Providence, and the blessed hope of a blissful meeting at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, calmed their feelings, and filled them with a quiet and holy resignation.

The Conference to which Mr. Lee was now attached, was held in the city of Baltimore, on the 1st of May, 1787. Of the business that occupied the attention of the Conference, Bishop Asbury says: "We had some warm and close debates in Conference; but all ended in love and peace. After much fatigue and trouble, our Conference ended on Monday, the 6th of May." Although nothing is here said of the subjects that occasioned the "warm and close debates" of this session, yet we are not altogether without information as to some of the points in debate; and from their nature we

may easily conjecture that the dispute would be both warm and close. One of these subjects was the old, vexed one of slavery. The spirit of antagonism to slavery, though greatly moderated, was not entirely quieted. But in some respects the character of the agitation was changed. The Conference now sought as earnestly to promote the spiritual emancipation of the slaves from the dominion of sin, as it had formerly strove to effect their deliverance from civil bondage. In this they were strictly within the limits of their ministerial function. But it would seem from the spirit and language of the rule\* that the interest for the slaves had abated, or that it had spent its strength upon the efforts for their deliverance from legal bondage; or, losing hope of accomplishing any real benefit to the slave by their crusade against slavery, they had at length resolved to confine themselves to the just and well defined limits of their ministry, and by a course more accordant with the conduct of the Apostles, seek, by bringing master and servant under the power of the gospel, to promote the mutual welfare and final salvation of both. It was no doubt owing to this change that we find, from the time of distinguishing between the whites and blacks in reporting the numbers in Society in 1786, a regular and most gratifying increase in the membership of the Church from that class of the population of the country.† It is true, similar, and even greater success, attended their labours among the whites.‡

\* "Ques. 17. What directions shall we give for the promotion of the spiritual welfare of the slaves?

"Ans: We conjure all our Ministers and Preachers, by the love of God, and the salvation of souls, and do require them, by all the authority that is invested in us, to leave nothing undone for the spiritual benefit and salvation of the negroes, within their respective circuits, or districts; and for this purpose to embrace every opportunity of inquiring into the state of their souls, and to unite in Society those who appear to have a real desire of fleeing from the wrath to come, to meet such in class, and to exercise the whole Methodist Discipline among them." Minutes, 1787.

† This increase will appear from the following statement. In 1786 there were 1890 blacks in Society; in 1787, 3693; in 1788, 6545; in 1789, 8943; in 1790, 11,682. Making an average increase on the original number of 9448 per annum. Would this gratifying result have been reached if the practice of preaching against slavery had been continued?

‡ The following table will illustrate this. In 1786, there were 18,791 whites in Society; in 1787, 21,949; in 1788, 30,809; in 1789, 35,019; in 1790, 45,949.

But this may have resulted, in part, and under the blessing of God, from ceasing to agitate the Societies upon a subject that, after it is magnified to the greatest stretch of importance, is still subordinate to the peace of the Church and the salvation of souls. And it is very clear, whatever opinions may now be entertained of the course our fathers deemed it right and proper to pursue in the matter of emancipation, that the greatest revivals that, it is probable, have ever distinguished the labours of the Methodist ministry, were commenced immediately after the suspension of our Ecclesiastical measures against slavery.\* And to the present time, the largest success and richest triumphs of Methodism in America, have been wrought out on soil hated and denounced by unreasonable men for its connexion with this, in their judgment, giant abomination.

Another subject that gave interest to the Conference, and origin and matter for close and strong debate, respected the position sustained by Dr. Coke to the Church in America. He had arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, on his second visit to the United States, on the 28th of February, 1787, and, after the adjournment of the Conference in that city, had travelled with Bishop Asbury through North Carolina and Virginia, attending the Virginia Conference, and preaching very generally during the tour in both states. Previous to his arrival, he had, perhaps to suit his own plan of travelling, altered the time and place of holding some of the Conferences.. This was exercising a power not granted to the Episcopacy by the statutes or usages of Methodism. The place, especially, of holding a Conference was determined upon by the body, and after that was settled there was an obvious inconvenience attending its removal, or in changing the time of its meeting. The interference with this established usage of the Church met with the decided disapproba-

\* It forms no valid objection to this position, that Methodism is now successful even while agitated by the measures of Abolitionists. For, in the first place, the agitation now is *partial*, and remote from the slaveholding states; whereas, at the time referred to in the text, the agitation embraced the whole Church, and was most violent in the presence of slavery. And, in the second place, a comparison of the state of Methodism *now*, in the Abolition Conferences and those in the slaveholding states, will confirm the position that success is greatest where the least opposition is evinced to the legal relation between master and slave. In a word, the triumph of the Church is always greatest where she confines her efforts to her legitimate objects.



tion of many of the ministers. It was also urged against Dr. Coke that he had written letters to some of the ministers calculated to produce discord among them, to the injury of religion and the grief of the Church. In the Baltimore Conference these matters were complained of. The opposition to the course he had pursued was general and decided. Of the letters referred to in the records that have come down to us, we know nothing, except that they are denominated "improper," and "such as were calculated to stir up strife and contention among" the Preachers, by one who was present at the time, and who reports the opinion entertained of them by the Conference. Still, it is not improbable but their design was misconstrued, their import misunderstood, and their character exaggerated. Charity, aided by even a partial knowledge of the Doctor's character, will justify such an interpretation of their contents. And, with regard to the changes he is said to have made in the time and place of holding the Conferences, it may be very safely attributed to a strong anxiety to be present at them, which, without such a change, he could not accomplish. And in this view of the subject a reasonable apology, if not a sufficient justification, might have been made for the proceeding. But in this light the Conference did not regard the matter. To them it wore the aspect of an interference with the conventional rights and just authority of the Conference, and they resisted it as an encroachment upon them, no less than a departure from the essential principles of the *moderate* Episcopacy that entered into the constitution of the Church. Upon this ground there is ample justification for the apparent harshness and severity of their proceedings. They were jealous for the Ecclesiastical system they had taken so much pains to establish, and, in justice to themselves and their principles, they could not overlook the first infraction of its laws. And while, with a manliness of purpose to preserve their constitution, and a just and a proper reverence for their Bishop, they rebuked the interference; they, with a far reaching acumen, provided against all future causes of complaint by demanding a relinquishment, on the part of Dr. Coke, of all right and authority to exercise Episcopal jurisdiction over the Church during his absence from the United States. The Doctor yielded to this demand, acknowledged the impropriety of his course both with respect to the changes of the Conferences, and the letters

to the Preachers, and gave to the Conference a solemn promise never again to interfere with the affairs of the Church during his absence from the country. He also gave a written instrument binding himself to the observance of his promise. It is in the form and language following;

“The Certificate of Dr. Coke to the Conference.

“I do solemnly engage by this instrument, that I never will, by virtue of my office, as Superintendent of the Methodist Church, during my absence from the United States of America, exercise any government whatever in the said Methodist Church during my absence from the United States. And I do also engage, that I will exercise no privilege in the said Church when present in the United States, except that of ordaining according to the regulations and law, already existing or hereafter to be made in the said Church, and that of presiding when present in Conference, and lastly, that of travelling at large. Given under my hand, the second day of May, in the year 1787.

THOMAS COKE.

Witnesses:

JOHN TUNNILL,

JOHN HAGERTY,

NELSON REED.”

After the presentation of this instrument the Conference agreed to overlook and forgive all that was past, but it was, at the same time, expressly stipulated that the engagement of Dr. Coke was to be entered on the Minutes. Accordingly, in answer to the question: “Who are the Superintendents of our Church for the United States?” it stands: “Thomas Coke (when present in the States) and Francis Asbury.” In the previous years, the words *for the United States*, as they stand in the first question for this, are not found in the Minutes. The proceedings of Dr. Coke, above related, opened the eyes of the Conference to the necessity of restricting him from the exercise of Episcopal prerogatives, except when he was present with the Church and cognizant of its affairs. It is not improbable but the circumstances now passing under review had the effect of inducing the Conference to recede from its engagement to submit to the authority of Mr. Wesley in all Ecclesiastical matters

during his life. At least, it is certain that the same reason, the practical difficulties in the way of such an administration, rendering it impossible in local matters, and extremely difficult in general affairs, for one so remote from the scene to act with a proper regard to the various individual and public interests involved, operated in both instances; and not only authorized the decisions of the Conference, but furnishes a most complete and unassailable justification of its action in each.

The recession from the engagement to submit to the authority of Mr. Wesley occurred at the Conference whose proceedings we are reviewing; and no doubt gave origin to some of the "warm and close debates" heretofore referred to. The occasion of this act is too important an event in the history of American Methodism, to be omitted in a notice, however brief, of the times in which it transpired. Among the proceedings of the General Conference of 1784, which resulted in the complete organization of the Church, the following engagement was entered into, whether at the instigation of Dr. Coke, or of their own voluntary offer and deed, we have no information. But it was an engagement made in good faith, and in the confidence of a profound veneration for the great and good man for whom they cherished feelings of filial reverence and affection. It was in these words: "During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, ready, in matters belonging to Church government, to obey his commands. And we do engage, after his death, to do everything that we judge consistent with the cause of religion in America and the political interests of these States, to preserve and promote our union with the Methodists in Europe."\* The avowed object of this engagement, and, perhaps, the only one that could justify it, was the preservation of the Ecclesiastical identity and spiritual unity of Methodism. And they did not doubt but both might be maintained in subordination, on their part, to the judgment of Mr. Wesley in all things relating to Church government. But they were drawing too largely upon human nature when they entered that resolution upon their Minutes. Yet it was done "in the integrity of their hearts, and the innocency of their hands." At the Conference of 1787 the propriety of the engagement was put to the test of stern experi-

\* Minutes of General Conference of 1784, Answer to Question 2.

ment. Mr. Wesley, to honour a man greatly beloved, by increasing his responsibilities and enlarging the field of his usefulness, and, as under the act of the Conference, if he so understood it, he had a perfect right to do, directed that Mr. Whatcoat should be ordained a joint Superintendent with Bishop Asbury. A large majority of the Preachers objected to the appointment, and refused their consent to it. This was done upon broad and comprehensive grounds. With an independence that does them credit, they demurred to the appointment of Mr. Whatcoat, *because* he was unqualified by experience and attainments, and a capacity for government, to take charge of a Church so complex in its relations to the different sovereign states of our Confederated Government; so unique in its general character, and yet so diversified in its local interests; so strongly opposed in some of its measures, and yet so rapidly developing its resources, and multiplying its successes in every department of its operations: for such an office they did not deem him competent, and with commendable candour they declared their opinions. In the next place, they were apprehensive, with what reason is not known, that, if they consented to the ordination of Mr. Whatcoat, Mr. Wesley, supposing they could then dispense with the services of Bishop Asbury, might recall him to England, and thereby deprive the Church of his invaluable services in the councils of their Conferences, and on the broad field of their itinerant operations,—a consummation, in their judgment, devoutly to be deplored, and to be prevented even in despite of the imputation of disobedience to an authority erected by themselves, and which they had resolved to obey. Dr. Coke, anxious to carry out his instructions, urged the obligation they were under to obey Mr. Wesley, grounded upon the authority they had conferred upon him to make the appointment. But it was replied, that many of those now present and objecting to the appointment, were not members of the Conference of 1784; and therefore, as they had no participation in the original decision, and did not approve of the engagement, they were under no obligation to submit to it. In civil transactions such enactments would be binding, but in Ecclesiastical questions one generation has no power to legislate for another. Moreover, it was argued, that the measure was purely a Conference transaction, and not binding as a moral subject; that if the Conference

had the right to enter into the engagement, they also had the right to recede from it; and that if they found it to be wrong in principle, and impracticable or injurious in operation, they were under the force of a moral obligation to annul the arrangement. And the impolicy of the whole arrangement was argued upon the grounds of the remoteness of Mr. Wesley from the field whereon they were employed in building the temple of God, and of his want of information on a variety of subjects whose nature and importance, however adverse and conflicting, found a centre of unity in the Episcopacy, and thereby invested that office with an incalculable authority and responsibility, that, in the nature of things, disqualified him for any proper use of the power with which he was intrusted by the act of 1784, especially with regard to the appointment of Bishops. The very nature of the Episcopal office, its trusts and instrumentalities, as established at the Christmas Conference, foredoomed the engagement of submission to Mr. Wesley, as unwise and impracticable; and that without any disrespect to him, or any disparagement to those who receded from it. This act of recession has formed the theme of much ill-natured declamation from those who, having seceded from Methodism, have striven, by affected veneration for Mr. Wesley, to throw odium upon this act of the fathers of the American Methodist Church. But if there was any thing wrong in the transaction, it was in the decision by which the Conference of 1784 bound themselves to obey Mr. Wesley's commands in matters belonging to Church government. This was the real act of impropriety. It was surrendering more for themselves than comported with the responsibility of exercising "a right judgment in the things of God;" and it was surrendering more for those who came after them than they had any right to do. But, although it was opening a door for difference and discord, it was done in the simplicity of Christian affection, not as a stipulated covenant between them and Mr. Wesley, but as an expression of their veneration for him, and of their unbounded confidence in the purity of his character and the soundness of his judgment. Nor is there any reason to believe that they considered the rule they had adopted on the subject as an act empowering Mr. Wesley to appoint their Superintendents, or binding themselves to acquiesce in such an appointment, if he should make it. In the Prayer Book

sent to America by Dr. Coke, and prepared for the Methodists by Mr. Wesley, the form for "the Ordination of Superintendents," provides that "after the Gospel and the sermon are ended, the *elected person* shall be presented by two Elders unto the Superintendent." And the Minutes of the Conference of 1784 declared that "No person shall be ordained a Superintendent, Elder, or Deacon, *without the consent of a majority of the Conference.*" These two facts show the office of Superintendent was designed to be *elective*. That the Conference did not intend, by their resolution to obey Mr. Wesley in matters of Church government, to authorize him to appoint their Superintendents, is evident from the fact, that at the same session they made the office to depend upon the consent of a majority of their own body; and it was only by such an election that Mr. Asbury would accept it. And that Mr. Wesley did not so regard it is equally clear. It is certain from the Prayer Book, that he neither claimed nor expected to exercise such an authority after the formal organization of the Church. And in the case of Mr. Whatcoat, there is no ground for supposing that he assumed the power of appointment. The letter to Dr. Coke on the subject contains no command, and only expresses a desire that he may be appointed Superintendent.\* When, therefore, in obedience to his instructions, Dr. Coke urged the appointment of Mr. Whatcoat, the Conference, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, and in the exercise of an independent right, refused their consent. By this refusal they offered no violation to their own rule, and intended no disrespect to Mr. Wesley. But since the design of the rule was misapprehended by some, and their refusal to consent to the elevation of Mr. Whatcoat to the Episcopal office was construed into insubordination to the authority of Mr. Wesley, by others, they very prudently resolved to rescind the rule by which they had resolved to obey him, and thereby remove every ground of dispute or misunderstanding. It was this act of receding from the rule of 1784, that constituted what is known in our Ecclesiastical history as leaving Mr. Wesley's name off the Minutes. In conclu-

\*Mr. Wesley, in a letter to Dr. Coke, dated London, September 6, 1786, says: "I *desire* that you would appoint a General Conference of all our Preachers in the United States, to meet at Baltimore, on May the first, 1787. And that Mr. Richard Whatcoat *may be* appointed Superintendent with Mr. Francis Asbury.

sion of this affair, the Conference wrote an affectionate letter to Mr. Wesley, it is probable detailing the circumstances of the transaction, and inviting him to visit his spiritual children in America; that he might see how graciously God had blessed them, understand their various concerns, and be satisfied of the rectitude of their actions, even in departing from the course he had suggested.\*

The Conference whose transactions we have been considering, was, perhaps, the longest one that had ever been held in America. Previously, two days had sufficed for the completion of their business; but six days, according to Bishop Asbury, had been occupied in the business that came before this. But the great principles claiming attention were settled; the government of the Church was placed on a firmer basis, and when they departed to their appointments, it was with unabated confidence in the efficiency of their organization, and with a profounder respect and affection for each other.

The appointment of Mr. Lee for the year on whose duties we have now entered, stands on the Minutes for Baltimore, but there is reason to believe that several months, immediately after Conference, were spent on the circuit adjoining the city. After the adjournment of the Conference he returned on a short visit to his friends on the Kent circuit. While here he visited a sick lady; and found, in the circumstances that brought her to a participation

\* It may not be out of place to add here, as it forms a part of the history of the times, that the Conference during the year 1787 undertook the settlement of a matter respecting married Preachers, which had formed the subject of considerable complaint in preceding years. From the nature of the rule adopted to regulate the support of married Preachers, it would seem that they were in the habit of stipulating with the people for the amount they were to receive, or of claiming more than a proportionate allowance, taking the disciplinary regulation as the standard of apportionment. Hence the rule as it stands on the Minutes:

"Ques. 18. Are not many of our Preachers and people dissatisfied with the salaries allowed our married Preachers, who have children?"

"Ans. They are. Therefore, for the future, no married Preacher shall demand more than forty-eight pounds a year (Pennsylvania currency)." In 1774, Preachers were allowed "six pounds (Pennsylvania currency) per quarter, and their travelling charges besides." In 1778, Preachers were allowed eight pounds (Virginia currency) per quarter. In 1780, "the wives of married Preachers were to receive an equivalent with their husbands in quarterage, if they stand in need."

of the blessings of the atonement, encouragement to imitate the example of Christ—*who went about doing good*—or to continue in the doctrine of the Apostle, and *exhort, reprove, and rebuke, with all long-suffering and authority*. When he entered the room, she began to weep and praise God; and to declare His goodness to her soul. Addressing Mr. Lee, she said: “Last Sunday-week, when I took my leave of you at the Meeting House, you spoke to me about the welfare of my soul, and it had such weight with me that I promised the Lord that I would not eat, drink, or sleep, till He pardoned my sins; and that night I did not sleep. The next day, about four o’clock, the Lord set my soul at liberty, and I wanted to see you; I knew you would help me to praise the Lord.” How mysterious, often, is the way of the Spirit in bringing a sinner from the darkness of this world, to the light and joy of spiritual things! Many who harden their hearts against all the efforts of the pulpit, and are proof alike against the terrors of the Lord and the persuasive eloquence of the gospel, have their hearts broken by a less public, but kind word spoken in season. And how strongly do all such instances plead for a diligent observance of the Apostolic rule—be instant in season, out of season,—a word fitly spoken may save a soul. Knowing Mr. Lee’s anxiety to do good, we may readily imagine the pleasure he experienced in learning that God had so honoured him as to make him a blessing to one for whom Christ died.

On returning from this visit, Mr. Lee, according to the statement of Mr. Thrift, “went to travel a circuit adjoining the city of Baltimore, where he laboured with good success, until the latter part of August, at which time he took his appointment in the city.” In the Minutes for the year, his name stands as the minister for Baltimore. Whether the postponement of the time of entering upon his pastoral duties in the city, was by the special appointment of the Conference, or a private arrangement to suit the convenience of some brother in the ministry, we have not been able to discover. And it is a matter of small importance, since, wherever he was, he was happy in the belief that God’s presence was with him, and would prove a helper of his ministry and a solace of his heart; and this was all his desire, and all his delight.



In August, Mr. Lee entered upon his duties in the city of Baltimore. Here was a new field—*while already unto the harvest*—wherein he might find full employment for all his talents, a ready demand for all his energies. The population of a crowded city, composed as it is of such a variety of classes, and so many shades of moral character, presents to a Christian minister, whose heart has been moulded by the Spirit into a resemblance of Christ, an ever varying but constantly enlarging field of diligent and useful toil. And from every survey of the field his spirit must return oppressed and sorrowing for the thousands who, with little or no consciousness of danger, are hurrying on to a doom as certain and changeless as it is terrific and eternal. Even among the more refined and educated classes of society, he will often find a forgetfulness of God, and a disregard of religion, as deep and ruinous, though not so debasing, as that which revels in the indulgence of a gross and brutalizing licentiousness. And, on every hand, he will find reason for giving utterance to words with which the holy and warm-hearted Apostle declared his sense of the perilous condition of the Gentile world—"having no hope, and without God." If we may judge of the feelings of Mr. Lee with respect to the moral condition of the people, from the plans he adopted, and the efforts he employed to bring them from the power of Satan unto God, there can be no room to question but he was burdened with anxiety to improve their morals and promote their salvation. He seems to have regarded the city as in some sense his parish, and to have desired to bring his ministry to bear with spiritual efficiency upon the entire population. But he knew that true wisdom not only sought the best ends, but selected the most suitable and efficient means for prosecuting them. In all his plans of usefulness he aimed to begin at the right place, and to build on the true foundation. His first duty was with the Church of God—to preserve its purity, to promote its spirituality: his next, was to bring the aliens and strangers to the unity of a true faith in Christ, and the fellowship of a holy love with his people. To both of these objects he gave his most faithful diligence.

As soon as he was settled in his new field of labour, Mr. Lee entered upon a course of means that, prosecuted with efficiency, he knew would issue in good to the Church of God. Surveying the

new relations in which he was placed with a scrutiny that embraced the duties, and felt the responsibilities of the pastoral office, he determined to make duty and conscience, not the example, however excellent, of any who may have preceded him, the rule of his efforts. The pastoral work, comprehending a faithful performance of all the offices that religion exacts for the promotion of the glory of God and the salvation of men, was felt as a most pressing obligation; and zealously did he strive to meet all its demands. In obedience to the rule he had adopted, to do all the good in his power, he commenced a regular visitation of the classes, in order to learn the spiritual state of his people, that he might adapt his more public labours to their godly edifying. At the Conference of 1779, the question was asked, "Ought not every Travelling Preacher to meet the class wherever he preaches?" and it was answered, "Yes, if possible." With this rule of the Church—for it amounted to a positive requirement—Mr. Lee faithfully complied, as well because it was his duty to do so, as for the sake of the spiritual benefits attending the exercises of the class-room. Seeking to keep the fire of pure religion in his own heart, and desirous of receiving more grace, and of imparting, according to the measure of his ability, to the necessities of others, he was careful to use this most important means of grace himself, and thereby encourage his brethren to follow him, in obedience to the rule of the Church, and in striving after the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. The advantages of this course were twofold: his own heart was enlarged and strengthened, and the confidence of his people was secured, and their Christian zeal and diligence excited to greater activity in the work of the Lord.

In addition to a regular visitation of the classes, a general course of visiting for prayer and religious conversation was commenced, as an important part of the pastoral function, and as auxiliary to the great spiritual purposes of the ministry. In these visits, the matured Christian experience of Mr. Lee, and the fund of information upon all religious subjects he had gathered from reading and observation, were happily brought in to make his company agreeable, and his instructions impressive and effectual. Few men possessed greater or more attractive powers of conversation; and his memory was a capacious storehouse, full of treasured incidents, always at com-

mand to encourage the desponding, to rebuke the presuming, to revive and edify the humble believer, and to rekindle and give direction and energy to the zeal of the lukewarm and faltering. But, in his pastoral visits, he did not confine himself to those who belonged to the Church. He went to "those who needed him most," however insensible they might be of their need. Making his own sense of responsibility, not the feelings of the "dead in trespasses and sins," the gauge of his duty, he visited those who attended his ministry, following with private and personal entreaty to embrace the salvation which is in Christ, the more public but not less earnest exhortations to repentance and faith. Publicly, and from house to house, he testified the gospel of the grace of God; and, in simplicity and godly sincerity, but with meekness of wisdom, and the authority of a man of God, he reproved the guilty, warned the impenitent and unbelieving, wept and prayed with the sorrowful who sought after Christ, and rejoiced with the cheerful and happy partakers of the Divine Nature—the forgiven and saved.

The sick and afflicted also shared largely in the religious attentions of Mr. Lee. From the beginning of Methodism, it has been a recognised duty of the ministry to seek out the sick; to visit, instruct, and pray for them. This rule not only accords with what the Scriptures enjoin as a duty, but it coincides with the sympathies of pure and undefiled religion, and provides an incalculable fund of religious enjoyment for those who engage in it. Much of God's sovereignty over all things, is displayed in the sick-room. His punitive as well as His gracious dealings with men, are discovered alike in "the chamber where the good man meets his fate," and the couch whereon the guilty unbeliever "stretches his weary limbs to die." Afflictions spring not from the dust; and they are often forerunners of the grace of God. Many a redeemed and happy spirit will have occasion to say—in the pauses of the new song in heaven—"It is good for me that I was afflicted." And multitudes, while realizing the effects upon their own hearts, of ministering to the spiritual wants of the sick, may send back the joyful response, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." It was a pleasure to Mr. Lee to attend upon the sick and dying, anxious to comfort them with the comfort

wherewith he was comforted of God ; and, amid the scenes of the sick-room, he was often refreshed. In a great majority of cases, a Christian minister will find that affliction is a Providential pathway leading directly to the sinner's heart, and that conscience has already opened the door that he may enter, and preach Jesus and the resurrection.

Another field of usefulness upon which Mr. Lee entered with his usual avidity and industry, embraced the religious instruction of children. At the Conference of 1779, the importance of training the children of their people in the way they should go, was a subject of deep and earnest inquiry.\* The subject was renewed in 1787 ; and, as if to express the increased interest of the body, the record stands, what *can* we do for the rising generation ?† At this period Sunday Schools were not in existence in America, or were exceedingly scarce—and the Conference took this method of bringing the youth of their fold under the restraining influences of the gospel ; and the ministers were required to give their personal and especial attention to the religious instruction of children. And they were even authorized, so great was their anxiety for the young, to supervise, counsel, and assist the parental government. If there be a solitary evil accompanying the Sabbath School enterprise, it is to be found in the fact of having broken up the catechetical classes of the ministry, and excluded them from a direct supervision of the early religious instruction of the lambs of the fold. The rule making it the duty of each minister to form classes among the children, was considered preparatory to their introduction into the fellowship of the Church ; and shows what the Church then considered as the proper termination of a course of instruction for children. It was at the Conference from which Mr. Lee was appointed to Baltimore, that this rule was adopted ; and, as in

\* " Ques. 11. What shall be done with the children ? Ans. Meet them once a fortnight, and examine the parents with regard to their conduct towards them." Minutes, 1779.

† " Ques. 20. What can we do for the rising generation ?

" Ans. Let the Elders, Deacons, and Helpers, class the children of our friends in proper classes, as far as it is practicable, meet them as often as possible, and commit them, during their absence, into the care of proper persons, who may meet them at least weekly ; and if any of them be *truly awakened*, let them be admitted into Society." Minutes, 1787.

everything else of ministerial duty, he entered upon the work of forming classes among the children under his pastoral care, very soon after taking his place in the city. And it was not long before he was permitted to see the good results of the early planting. He was made a blessing to many. In September he says: "I met the class and was much comforted. I joined two in class, and both of them professed to have lately found the Lord. I have observed of late that the greater part of the stir has been among the young men and boys; several of them have been awakened and joined Society."

But the labours of Mr. Lee, in the city of Baltimore, compassed a wider sphere, and filled a larger space in the public mind. He knew that in so populous a place there were multitudes who not only knew nothing of Methodism, but were strangely ignorant of the whole subject of religion; and who, caring for none of these things, seldom or never attended the ministry of the word. And as he desired to warn every man, and to teach every man in all wisdom, he resolved to carry the gospel to those who would not come to the house of God to hear it. Accordingly, soon after his entrance upon his work, he commenced preaching in the most public places in the city. The first service of the kind was held on the Commons, at six o'clock in the evening. The text selected for this occasion, and suitable for a promiscuous crowd, was from Isaiah, lv. 7. In the account he gives of it he says: "I was greatly comforted in speaking, from first to last; and glory be to God! it was a time of power. Toward the end of the meeting, it appeared to me that the Lord was about to visit every soul with his love. It was a melting time, and many silent tears were dropped—some of the finely dressed people could not forbear weeping. We had an amazing large congregation of all ranks, and many persuasions. When we broke up and parted, I was greatly pleased to see the company walk away so quietly. I came away rejoicing in the Lord, and praising God for his presence with us. It appeared to me that God was about to revive his work in the town."

He continued preaching on the Commons for nearly two months, having on every occasion large and attentive congregations. He then went to the Market-house on Fell's Point, and preached to a

very large assembly, many of whom were sailors, who otherwise might never have heard a sermon, or been warned to flee the wrath to come. Yet these men, rude as they proverbially are, were respectful and attentive,—uncovering their heads, and remaining as quiet and orderly as if they had entered the sacred enclosures of the sanctuary. Again, he transferred his appointment to the Market-house on Howard's Hill, and was still followed by curious and interested multitudes. Here, as elsewhere, his ministry was effectual in the edifying of the people, and he felt assured that the good seed he had sowed would spring up, and sooner or later yield an abundant harvest.

In this way Mr. Lee strove to fulfil his ministry in Baltimore. And when it is stated that these efforts on the Commons, and in the Market-houses, were superadded to his regular Sabbath services in the Church, we shall understand more clearly the extent of his labours and the nature of his zeal. He was in labours abundant; and slothfulness formed no part of his character. Nor will it be surprising to discover that upon efforts such as these the Divine blessing rested in an eminent degree. The work of the Lord was greatly revived, and souls were born from above.

The year 1787 is gratefully remembered in the Methodist history of Virginia, for the most extensive and glorious revival of religion that ever occurred in the state. Far surpassing in the stretch of its influence, the power of its working, and the number of its converts, the gracious revival of 1776, it yet stands unrivalled by any subsequent effusion of the Spirit upon the Churches of Virginia. The accounts which have come down to us of that powerful manifestation of the Spirit, represent it as almost miraculous. The materials still extant of that great harvest-time, might be easily elaborated into a volume; and one more full of interest, or richer in religious incidents—the effects of simple faith; the strong fervours of devotional feeling, the efficiency of ministerial effort, and the rapid developement of religious principle—could scarcely be placed in the hands of a spiritual Christian. But, nearly as it falls in with the plan of our work, our limits will not admit of detail. Yet a brief general view of the revival, especially in its results, is due to the history of the times, and to the character of Mr. Lee,—as it was his

pleasure to participate somewhat in the closing periods of the work, and as it had a direct influence upon his maturity of grace.

The Virginia Conference for 1787 was held on the 19th of April, at Rough Creek Church, in Charlotte county. Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury were both present. The session was a peaceable and useful one. Public service was held three times a day; and "some souls were converted." Here, it is probable, the love and zeal of the ministers was powerfully excited, and they went out to their work in the true spirit of their Divine commission. It was not long before the seed they sowed brought forth a joyous harvest. But although the work of the Lord was generally revived, its most powerful manifestations seem to have been confined to the district over which the Rev. James O'Kelly presided. And in this district the most powerful displays of spiritual influence were witnessed in the Brunswick, Sussex, and Amelia circuits.

In each of these circuits great multitudes were turned to the Lord. In Sussex circuit about sixteen hundred were converted; in Brunswick, about eighteen hundred; and in Amelia, about eight hundred. The actual gain in the membership of the Church in these circuits was 2029 whites, and 817 coloured. In the state, taking the circuits lying in Virginia for our guide, the gain was about 4000. And in the connexion the increase was 11,512. Although the revival of this year extended through all the fields of Methodism, yet its most remarkable characteristics and its greatest success seem to have been vouchsafed to Virginia. In its commencement, progress, and effects, it was extraordinary. It was brought about by no array of effort, nor by the concentration upon any one point of extra ministerial labour. Nor was it carried on by any such means as, in these days of protracted meetings, are employed to promote the work of the Lord. Every minister was a revivalist, and found full employment in his own peculiar field of toil. The work commenced at the ordinary meetings for preaching, and when the minister passed on to his regular circuit appointments, the work was continued at the prayer-meetings of the laity. The Spirit of God seems to have entirely preoccupied the minds of the people with the solemn verities of religion, or, on the other hand, to have given an amazing energy to the word of the Lord,

and to the faith of the people. Strange instances of the supernatural power of both are recorded among the transforming and surprising effects of the revival. It was truly an outpouring of the Spirit. The Rev. Philip Cox,\* who was on the Sussex circuit, in a letter to Bishop Asbury, written while the revival was in progress, states that while preaching a funeral sermon over a little child, from the words: *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and with a congregation of about one hundred persons, "fifty of whom were old professors, and out of the other fifty the Lord spoke peace to thirty before we broke up the meeting." This occurred when Mr. Cox, having hurt one of his legs, had resolved to take a day's rest. But, being sent for, he went and preached, although he was compelled to sit on a table while dispensing the word of life.† In the same letter, speaking of the Quarterly Meeting at Jones's Chapel, Sussex circuit, he says: "Before the Preachers got there, the work broke out, so that when we came to the Chapel, above sixty were down on the floor, groaning in loud cries to God for mercy. It is thought our audience consisted of no less than five thousand the first day, and the second day of twice that number. We preached to them in the open air, and in the Chapel, and in the barn by Brother Jones's house, at the same time. Here were many of the first quality in the country, wallowing in the dust with their silks and broadcloths, powdered heads, rings, and ruffles, and some of them so convulsed that they could neither speak nor stir." At this meeting it was "believed that near two hundred whites, and more than half as many blacks professed to find him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write."

The revival in the Brunswick circuit was even more powerful than it was in Sussex, and the facts which have come down to our times of the almost miraculous labours of the Rev. John Easter, his strong faith, and his astonishing success, are far more surprising than any recorded of those days of the Son of Man. But we may not detail them. Yet, respecting the *character* of the work, it ought to be said that *convictions* for sin were sudden and strong. The

\* Arminian Magazine, vol. ii. 1790, p. 91.

† The next day Mr. Cox sat in a chair on a table in the woods near Lane's Meeting-House, and preached, when "above sixty souls were set at liberty."



whole moral nature was wrought upon by deep and powerful emotions that found expression in confession of sin, and in cries for mercy. And *conversions* were no less sudden and powerful. Supplications for pardon were quickly succeeded by songs of rejoicing and shouts of triumph. Many who came to the house of God careless and scoffing, returned, clothed and in their right minds, with new joy in their hearts, and a new pathway for their feet. The change was wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, and its genuineness received a thousand attestations in the altered lives, persevering fidelity, and increasing holiness of those who, in that gracious effusion of the Spirit, were brought from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

In this great work of grace, many of the immediate family of Mr. Lee were brought into the fellowship of Christ. He had been kept well acquainted with the progress of the work by the letters of his friends; and his soul had greatly desired to partake, with his brethren, of the toils and joys of the harvest. And before the revival had entirely subsided, it was his pleasure to assist in the gleanings of the vintage. Early in March 1788, he visited Virginia; and spent the last Sabbath in the month with his friends and brethren in Petersburg. Of the labour, effect, and pleasures of that day, he thus speaks:

“Sunday, 30th of March.—Petersburg. At 11 o'clock, I preached on Mark viii. 6: *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* I had a pretty large company, and felt great liberty in speaking, and the hearers were much affected; and, from the beginning, there were many silent tears shed. I felt my soul drawn out in love to God and man; and, before I was done, the power of God was manifested among us. One woman dropped down from her seat like a person struck dead; but, in a little while, she was enabled to rise and praise a sin-pardoning God aloud; and many shouted for joy. I observed a woman, finely dressed, just at my right hand, who trembled and shook as though she had an ague. At length she stood up, and I expected every moment to have seen her drop down in the place where she stood. In a little time, a young woman came and took hold of her, and they both fell down on their knees together. The young woman began to pray aloud for

the mourner. In a little time another young woman came, and, kneeling down, prayed with all her might. By this time there were several crying aloud, and the house rung with the cries of the people, both men and women. I began to weep myself, and was forced to stop preaching. In a little time the woman near me, for whom the young women were praying, was enabled to arise and praise God for having pardoned her sins. Cries and groans were heard in every part of the house. I could not help praising God aloud among the people. Here were two who professed openly that God had pardoned their sins; and many careless sinners were cut to the heart. Such a powerful meeting I have not seen for a long time; and, blessed be God, I not only saw it; but I felt it also."

In the afternoon he preached again to a still larger crowd of hearers; attracted, it is probable, by the fame of the preacher and the effects attending the morning service. A few days after this, he was at the home of his childhood, rejoicing to find all of his father's house, and many of his relatives and friends, partakers of the heavenly calling, and full of the joy and peace of believing.\* Here he received full and interesting details of the good work of the Lord; and he was both surprised and edified by the accounts of the powerful workings of the Spirit; powerful in the effects on the multitude, and in the changes wrought upon their religious feelings and their moral deportment. "They told me," he says, "of persons who were quite careless in the morning, and perhaps laughing at religion; but, going to meeting, they were cut to the heart, and dropped down as dead; and, after lying awhile, some perhaps for hours, and others not so long, have leaped up and praised God, from a sense of his forgiving love." So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed, that, in a few months, thousands were converted from the error of their ways, and the Church

\* Mr. Cox, in the letter already referred to, records the following fact, as having occurred at a meeting at which fifty souls were converted. Among these, "three daughters of one Jesse Lee, a Baptist preacher (uncle to Jesse Lee, our preacher), were down on the floor, crying to God to deliver them. Their brother came in, and got one of the daughters up to carry her out, swearing that she should not expose herself there: but before he got her out of the house, the Lord exposed him, striking him to the floor, and constraining him to cry, 'Save, or I sink into hell!'"

was filled with rejoicing converts. Of the work generally, he says: "I have never seen anything more like taking the kingdom by violence, than this. I have no doubt but many will say this is not of God, for God is not the author of confusion. But I answer, it must be of God; for the people are justified, and many are sanctified; and the devil cannot do this. But some will say, So much noise cannot be of God: but the Lord has by this means awakened and converted many that were careless before. Let the Lord work His own way. It is clear that the Lord has His way in the whirlwind. If we could have all the good, without the confusion, if such there be, it would be desirable; but, if not, Lord send the good, though it should be with double the confusion. We are too apt to say, 'Lord, prosper thy work, by this or that means.' But, if we pray for the work to revive, let this be our cry, 'Lord, make use of some means to save the people,' and let Him work His own way. If souls can be converted, I will be contented." This is a brief but comprehensive vindication of the work of the Lord; such as common sense would employ in defence of a subject that scepticism only could object to, and such as would satisfy every right-minded Christian. The *effects* produced upon individuals and communities, by religious revivals, furnish the best interpretation of their character, and constitute their best defence. The good resulting from the sound conversion of one sinner, would consecrate the wildest extravagance that might accompany it; and to save a soul from death is a matter of sufficient consequence to justify any effort that a Christian man might employ to effect it. A laboured defence of religious revivals, is a compliment to the selfish principles and false reasonings of carnal and worldly men, that a Christian ought to be slow to pay. Our fathers, like the Apostles, left the altered and holy lives of the converts to vindicate their claims *as workers together with God*, and to confute and silence the cogillings of unreasonable and wicked men.

Of the good effects of this revival, Mr. Lee was a delighted witness, and he had a heart to rejoice with them for the great things God had done for them. "I surely have cause to bless and praise God," he says, "that I came to Virginia this spring to see my old friends. But such a change in any people I never saw. There are many of the young converts that are as bold, zealous, and as

solemn as old Christians. There are but few, either men or women, boys or girls, but will pray when called upon, and sometimes without being asked." Such fruits attest the genuineness of the work, and demonstrate that the Spirit had been poured out from on high. Amidst these hallowing associations and engagements, Mr. Lee could have found pleasure for a much longer period than he was permitted to stay; but duty called him away, and after spending about a month with these rejoicing converts, he returned to his own work, to communicate the comfort of the Holy Ghost through the energy of his faithful ministrations. On his return to Baltimore, he was blessed in his own work with times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. In carrying out the plans he had previously adopted, under the newly-awakened feelings created by his intercourse with the happy Christians of Virginia, he found full employment and most gratifying success. A revival full of interest, and rich in good fruits, crowned his pious efforts to do good. Many souls were awakened and converted. And when he closed his labours for the year, the revival was still progressing. When he entered upon his ministry in Baltimore, there were in Society, 756 whites, and 196 coloured members. At the Conference of 1788, he reported a membership of 950 whites, and 269 coloured; showing an increase of the former of 194, and of the latter of 73, a clear gain for the year of 267.

In 1788, seven Conferences were held. Several of these were held south of Baltimore. It was probably owing to this circumstance that the Baltimore Conference met in September, thereby making the interval between the Conference of 1787 and that of 1788, to be sixteen months. The session of Conference for this year was held in the city of Baltimore. The revival so successfully going on in Baltimore during the summer, was signally increased during Conference. On Sunday afternoon, Bishop Asbury preached a solemn and affecting sermon in Mr. Otterbein's church, and during the closing prayer there was a most powerful manifestation of the Spirit. Many fell prostrate on the floor, helpless and broken-hearted. Many fled from the house in terror; and multitudes were attracted to it by strange curiosity, excited by the cries of the convicted sinner, and the recitals of those who fled from the scene. But the work was of God. The meeting was continued

upwards of two hours, and twenty souls found "peace and joy in believing." The good work was continued during the week, and on the following Sunday fifteen were converted at a meeting in the Market-house on Howard's Hill.\*

After the adjournment of the Conference, he attended the Philadelphia Conference, from which he received his appointment for the year 1788-9.

It is in several respects an interesting fact, that during the session of this Conference, the celebrated Dr. Rush visited it, and delivered an earnest and animated address on the use of ardent spirits, taking the broad ground then so strongly occupied by the Conference, and since so signally taken and maintained by the Temperance reformation, that *total abstinence* is no less the demand of our nature, than it is the rule of our safety. He insisted that allowable cases requiring their use were very few, and seldom occurring, and when necessary, *but very little* ought, in any case, to be used; and he besought the Conference to use their influence in trying to put a stop to the use, as well as to the abuse of ardent spirits. It was a noble effort of a noble philanthropist. It had the effect of producing fear where great caution had long existed.

From the Conference in Philadelphia, Mr. Lee was appointed to the Flanders circuit, lying partly in New Jersey and partly in New York. He had during this year, two colleagues, one of them, his brother, John Lee, who had accompanied him on his return from Virginia in the spring, and was now in the eighteenth year of his age, engaged in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. On this circuit he had trials of a new kind to encounter. The population was composed of materials collected out of nearly every nation—a mass almost as heterogeneous as that to which Peter preached on the day of Pentecost; and they were of creeds respecting religion as different as the climes that gave them birth. But Calvinism was predominant. It was clamorous for "divine decrees," and "imputed righteousness." A more formidable barrier could not have been placed in the way of a minister solicitous to win souls to Christ. Its decrees were repulsive; its righteousness imparted no joyous

\* Hist. Methodists, pp. 140-141.

assurance of acceptance in the Beloved. It could not, therefore, be acceptable to Mr. Lee. There was, in his own religious system, no affinity for its doctrines; and in his experience there was no identity of interest or feeling with it. The Churches were lukewarm, or if zealous, it was for doctrines, and not for graces; and they knew more of Divine sovereignty than of redeeming grace and justifying faith. These views were constantly opposing the success of his ministry; and his prayers and preaching were constantly in collision with them. As a general thing, he only preached against the "erroneous and strange doctrine," by the exhibition of his own purer faith. But there were times when he entered into a formal disputation with it, and opposed it with all the energy and skill he could command. On one occasion, he spoke "freely and fully against unconditional election and reprobation;" and he "found great liberty in speaking, and the power of God attended the Word. Many of the people wept, and some cried aloud." And so emboldened did he become by the evidence of Divine approbation, that he "told them at last that God had taken His oath against Calvinism, because He had declared, by the mouth of the Prophet: 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.' On uttering these words," he says, "I felt so much of the power of God, that it appeared to me as if the truth of the doctrine was sealed to the hearts of the hearers."

The following anecdote, which probably occurred on this circuit, will show the power of early prejudice, and convey a good idea of the zeal of Mr. Lee for truth in opposition to Calvinism. He once attended an appointment of a Calvinistic minister, and took his seat in the congregation, in front of the pulpit. The minister rose up and read his text: Psal. cx. 3, "Thy people shall be *made* willing in the day of thy power." Mr. Lee felt very uneasy. The text was slowly and solemnly repeated. It was too much for the Arminian. He sprang to his feet, and respectfully addressing the minister, said:

"My dear sir, have you not mistaken the text?"

The minister, very much surprised, replied that he had not.

"Will you please read it again?" said Mr. Lee.

It was read, and in the same way.

"Are you quite sure you read it *right*?" again asked Mr. Lee.

"Quite certain of it," was the cool reply.

"Well, that's very singular; it don't read so in my Bible," said the Methodist lover of free will and free grace, holding up a small pocket Bible towards the pulpit, and asking, "Will you be good enough to read it once more, and see if the word *made* is in the text?"

Slowly and surely he commenced reading:—

"Thy—people—shall—be"—he paused—looked earnestly at the words, and read again—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' True enough, there's no such word in the text." Mr. Lee resumed his seat. The people saw and felt the force of the commentary. But the minister did not see how God's people could "be willing" unless they were *made* so by irresistible grace; and he preached the doctrine, the text to the contrary notwithstanding.

The obstacles this *forcing* theory of Christianity was constantly opposing to the success of Mr. Lee, had no inconsiderable influence, it is likely, in leading him so publicly and earnestly to seek to expose its unscripturalness. But perhaps his zeal for truth was more commendable than his mode of pursuing it, at least, in the instance above related.

It cannot be surprising, that, in such a state of society, under the influence of such a doctrinal creed, the progress of religion was slow. Mr. Lee preached a present salvation, and he always looked for present effects; when, therefore, these did not follow, he found little satisfaction in the dull round of ordinary duty. And although, under such circumstances, he usually stirred up his heart, and multiplied his labours, yet it was not until several months had passed away that he saw any fruit of his ministry. In January 1789, he witnessed the dawns of a better and brighter day. His ministry was more numerously attended, his words seemed to sink more deeply into the mind, the congregations were more solemn and eager to hear; and class-meetings and watch-nights, and other devotional meetings, were more lively and joyful. He and his people were full of hope. The set time to favour Zion was come. A gracious work was vouchsafed to the circuit, and continued until the period of his departure to Conference in May. In

this work of grace, it was a source of great satisfaction to him to witness the successful labours of his brother John ; and in the brief memoir he subsequently published of his brother, he records his faithfulness, and bears a cheerful testimony to his usefulness.

While on this circuit he received an account of the conversion of an Indian woman, which he preserved in his Journal, and which, as a singular instance of God's regard to the prayer that goeth forth out of the heart, has been thereby preserved for the encouragement of those who seek to be reconciled unto God. It is given in his own words. "An Indian squaw, who was awakened some years past, when there was a great work among the Presbyterians in this part of the world, concluded that God would not hear her, because she could not pray in English ; but in the depth of her distress she recollected that she could say January and February ; and she immediately began to pray, 'January, February,' 'January, February,' and repeated the words till her soul was happily converted." God looketh on the heart—its language, "uttered or unexpressed," is understood and answered.

Mr. Lee closed his labours on Flanders circuit about the middle of May 1789, and repaired to New York, where the Conference for that year was to be held. His pleasure on this circuit had been derived chiefly from his work. The circuit was the least agreeable he had yet travelled ; but his labours had not been altogether unprofitable and vain ; and he thanked God and took courage, hoping to obtain from Conference a better field wherein to plant the word of life, from whence he might come again, bringing his sheaves with him. He was the first Methodist missionary that went into the moral wastes of that now fruitful and happy garden of the Lord.



## CHAPTER VI.

## FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF METHODISM INTO NEW ENGLAND IN 1789, TO THE SESSION OF THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE IN 1790.

Conference Boundaries—New England—Mr. Lee appointed to it—Qualifications for the Work—State of Religion—"Great Awakening" of 1742—Mr. Lee in Norwalk—A Repulse—His first Sermon—Visits Fairfield—Trials and Comforts—New Haven—Reading—Doctrinal Examination by an Advocate for Dancing—Stratfield—Success—Forms a Class—Stratford—Unexpected Honours—A sad Change—Greenwich—Trials—Opposition a Benefit—Weston—A Shot at Calvinism—Two Ministers differently Affected—Anecdote of a Tinker—New Haven—A novel Sight—New Town—Reading—Controversy—Forms a Class—Conversion of four Men, who became Preachers—Fairfield—Difficulties—Greenfield, and Dr. Dwight—Bridgeport—Singular Introduction of Methodism—Visits Rhode Island—Reinforcements—Farmington—A Dialogue—East Windsor—Crosses and Comforts—Pleasant Fasting—Suffield—A Baptist Preacher—Three Dogs—Boston—Preaches on the Common—Newburyport—Strange Objection—Tomb of Whitefield—Salem—Returns to Boston—Reflections.

PREVIOUS to the General Conference of 1796 there were no prescribed boundaries to the yearly Conferences. "The Bishop had the right of appointing as many Conferences as he thought proper, and at such times and places as he judged best."\* Sometimes these Conferences were held within thirty or forty miles of each other; and were necessarily composed of only a few ministers, with very little business besides reporting the condition of their circuits, and receiving their appointments to new fields of labour. It was owing to the fact just mentioned that ministers are so frequently reported in the earlier records of the Church as, in consecutive years, receiving their appointments from different Conferences, even while labouring, during the time, within a very small district of country. This arrangement of the Conference session was not satisfactory to the Preachers, and hence, at the date above

\* Lee's Hist. Methodists, p. 141.

mentioned, it was abrogated, and Conference boundaries were defined, with the chartered right of choosing the place of their session. The Bishop, as now, and very properly, designated the time.

The Conference from which Mr. Lee received his appointment for the year 1789, was held in the city of New York. It commenced on the 28th of May; but when it ended, or what was done, we have not been able to discover.\* We have the assurance of Bishop Asbury, however, that "all things were conducted in peace and order." The fact of a most gratifying increase of the work of the Lord, in the city particularly, and of its gradual extension through the state, is referred to both by Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury. The latter says: "New England stretcheth out the hand to our ministry, and I trust thousands will feel its influence." A prayer that at this time is receiving a blessed consummation. At the close of the Conference Mr. Lee was appointed to the Stamford circuit, in the state of Connecticut.

At a very early period of his ministry, the attention of Mr. Lee had been very strongly drawn to the moral and spiritual condition of New England. During his brief travel with Bishop Asbury in 1784, in South Carolina, he had held a conversation with a young gentleman of Massachusetts respecting the religious peculiarities of the people, that so impressed his mind as to induce him to importune the Bishop's permission to go and preach a purer faith and a more scriptural religion to those who, in his judgment, were sitting in spiritual darkness, if not in the shadow of death. With a desire that experienced no abatement from its inception, he had looked for the arrival of the time when he might carry to the dwellers in that land of steady habits the sound doctrines of free grace and free will; and engraft, upon the barren stock of imputed righteousness, the living branches of the gospel—the righteousness which is

\* At some one of the Conferences held during this year, an explanatory clause respecting the rule for the trial of members, was adopted, and published in the Minutes. The rule required a trial "before the Society, or a select number." The explanation was, that thus the Society "might take knowledge, and give advice, and bear witness to the justice of the whole process;" and, also, "that improper and private expulsions may be prevented for the future." Appended to the rule, in the edition of the Discipline for 1789, are these words: "N. B. From this time forward, no person shall be owned as a member of our Church, without six months' trial."

of faith, and the indwelling witness of the Spirit. From the origin of this desire, every evolution of the wheel of the itinerant system had brought him nearer to the fields whereon he was to gain his greatest triumphs for Christ, as every returning Conference found him increasing in the qualifications, both of mind and heart, necessary to a vigorous and successful prosecution of the work. There is a Providence that shapes the ends of life, prescribes its duties, and presides over its course. The pathway through which Mr. Lee had been conducted from his childhood to his entrance into the ministry, and from thence to the period we are now reviewing, indicates the presence of a providential adaptation for some more important, but not very remote, change in his labours. From this point we can look back at the various circumstances of his Christian course, and see how, while they were operating directly upon his own religious character, they were also fitting him to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The abundance, regularity, and efficiency of his previous labours; his steady advancement in knowledge; the independence and firmness of his mind; the steady and intense warmth of his religious experience; and his heartfelt anxiety to do good "to the souls and bodies of men," were qualifications at once peculiar to him, and necessary constituents in the character of a pioneer of Methodism in New England. Some of his contemporaries doubted whether Methodism could find a congenial soil among a people so naturally cold, and so proverbially calculating. In morals they were supposed to be in the frigid zone. But Mr. Lee did not agree with his contemporaries. The steady sunlight of truth was in his mind; and the fire of a holy love was, as a live coal from the altar of sacrifice, always burning on his heart. He regarded Methodism as the imbodiment of Christianity, and he believed it, more than any other form of religion, adapted to bring sinners to Christ, and promote true piety of heart. It was this sense of adaptation, operating upon a long-cherished desire, that induced him to offer himself as a missionary to a people indurated with doctrinal errors, fond of controversy, and alive to creeds and confessions, but dead to faith and calling upon God. In addition to what has been already said, respecting the qualifications of Mr. Lee for the arduous work upon which he was about to enter, the following testi-

monial of one of his contemporaries,\* yet lingering behind his companions, like the last leaf of autumn, is no less true in itself than it is just as a tribute to the memory of the Apostle of Methodism in New England. "All who knew Mr. Lee will agree that he was peculiarly fitted for that work. He possessed uncommon colloquial powers, and a fascinating address, calculated in a high degree to prepossess the mind in his favour. His readiness at repartee was scarcely equalled; and by the skilful use of this talent he often taught those disposed to be witty with him at his expense, that the safest way to deal with him was to be civil. But what was of more importance, he was fired with a missionary zeal. The truth which made him free he wished to proclaim to others, and especially to the inquisitive and enterprising descendants of the Pilgrims. He did not doubt but that it would make its way into that land of priests, and open a wide field for action and usefulness. He was moreover a man of great moral courage, and more than ordinary preaching talents. He preached with more ease than any other man I ever knew, and was, I think, the best every-day Preacher in the Connection. Such was the man who . . . first lifted the standard of Methodism in the New England states." We shall find, in the course of the succeeding narrative, frequent illustrations of the successful application of the versatile talent here attributed to Mr. Lee.

While on the Flanders circuit the preceding year, Mr. Lee had been brought in contact with a great variety of character, and almost every principle of religious belief. He was now to enter upon his ministerial duties in the midst of a people possessed of every shade of opinion, and presenting a complete assortment of religious notions, from the "high mystery of predestination" as held by Edwards and the elder Puritans, to the demoralizing and destructive tenets of Sandeman.† Of the mass of those who

\* Rev. T. Ware, *Memoir of*, pp. 207-8.

† In a graveyard at Danbury, Mr. Lee copied the following inscription, descriptive of the belief referred to in the text. "Here lies until the resurrection, the body of Robert Sandeman, a native of Perth, North Britain, who, in the face of continual opposition from all sorts of men, long and boldly contended for the ancient faith; that the bare work of Jesus Christ, without a deed, or thought, on the part of man, is sufficient to present the chief of sinners, spotless before God: to declare this blessed truth, as testified in the Holy Scriptures, he left

may be supposed to have been well instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, it can scarcely be uncharitable to say they were very lukewarm, if not entirely "fallen from grace." "The Great Awakening" in 1734, under the ministry of the elder Edwards and his contemporaries; was continued with increasing success until 1742. The visit of Whitefield during the progress of this gracious work, in the fall of 1740, was most opportune, and proved of great benefit in promoting it. Immense multitudes flocked to his ministry, and the work received a new impulse, and was extended to new and distant places. For several years subsequent to this gracious visitation of spiritual influence, the people "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." But after these years of abundant increase, came years of wasting and desolation—a long season of spiritual drought, when formalism, the caterpillar of devotion, and controversy, the canker-worm† of Christian experience, entered and despoiled the vineyard of every green thing within its heritage. Religion, originally established by law, was now leaning on the law for its support. The ministry, made, by law, independent of the people, and thereby divested of a strong, but subordinate, motive for faithfulness in their work, were chiefly careful to maintain a decent gravity of deportment; and, as is always the case in such a condition of religion, were more watchful to detect an error in doctrine, than to correct a defective experience, or to make straight and sure paths for the wandering and failing steps of the thoughtless and profane. With a very general correctness of moral conduct, there was a most lamentable departure from those essential elements of a true and lively zeal which the faithful preaching of Justification by faith, and its concomitant doctrines, had produced in the great revival already referred to, and always will produce under an evangelical ministry. It was under a series of sermons upon this first, last, most comprehensive and effective doctrine of the gospel—Justification by faith—preached in Northampton by Mr. Edwards, that the awakening took place, and it lasted as long as the doctrine occupied a prominent place in the teachings of the

his country, he left his friends, and after much patient suffering, finished his labours at Danbury, 2d April, 1771, aged 53 years."

\* Joel, i. 4.

pulpit. It was a temporary departure from the doctrines of grace, according to the designation of Calvinism, and a manifest surrender, for the time, of the doctrines of Divine sovereignty, eternal election, irresistible grace, and the impotency of the human will, to preach that the only way of a sinner's salvation is by simple faith in Jesus Christ. But the surrender was made; and, so long as it stood aside and was silent, the true doctrine—the Word of God—had free course, and was glorified. But when again the “high mystery of predestination” “stood up in the holy place,” its awful form overshadowed the atonement, and spread the pall of death over the way of life and salvation. The cross, with its subduing and transforming influences, was removed from its position in the system of redemption; and instead of concentrating the heart with its affections, the soul with its hopes, upon Christ—the only Saviour of sinners—the pulpit sought to employ the mind with a dull and endless speculation upon eternal prescience, and the omnipotence of Divine decrees. The effect of such a system of religious training might have been easily foreseen. But, standing as we are in the presence of its developements, it is the duty of the historian, and not of the seer, that must engage our attention. The habit of considering doctrines so abstruse and intricate, cannot fail to enlarge and strengthen the intellect. And, when superadded to even the Common School system of education, it will contribute very materially to the social rectitude and moral integrity of a people. Such was the character of the New England States, at the period of their history now passing under review. The people were of grave and orderly deportment, of an inquisitive turn of mind, fond of controversy—especially upon religious subjects—strict observers of the Sabbath, and devoted to their Ecclesiastical government, their modes of faith, and forms of worship. Can these dry bones live? Can a purer faith strike its roots into this rocky soil? Can a holier covenant, even that which blends Divine sovereignty with the freedom of the human will, the work of Christ with the faith of a sinner, the grace of the Spirit with the testimony of a good conscience, spread its branches over a people indurated with elective affinities, and trenched behind eternal decrees? Come and see.

The time had come for Mr. Lee to enter upon the mission that

had so long occupied his thoughts. He had sought God's direction in the undertaking, and he started upon his journey importuning the Divine blessing upon his work. He had no hope of success apart from the effectual working of the Holy Ghost. On the afternoon of the 17th of June, 1789, he reached Norwalk in Connecticut. He went at once to the residence of a Mr. Rogers, at whose house, through a friend, he had solicited permission to preach. Mr. Rogers had left home, but left a refusal behind him, which his wife was not backward in communicating. "When I came," he says, "Mrs. Rogers told me her husband was from home, and was not willing for me to preach in his house. I told her we would hold meeting in the road rather than give any uneasiness. We proposed speaking in an old house that stood just by, but she was not willing. I then spoke to an old lady for permission to preach in her orchard, but she would not consent, because, she said, we would tread the grass down." Foiled in each of these efforts, and yet determined to preach, he sent a notice through the village and took his stand in the street, and commenced preaching to about twenty hearers. His text for the occasion was John iii. 7: *Ye must be born again*. A subject that at once explains his purpose in visiting the country, and furnishes the reason of all his success in planting Methodism in a soil so little congenial with its spirituality. Of this, his first sermon in New England, he says: "Most of the congregation paid particular attention to what I said, and two or three women seemed to hang down their heads, as if they understood something of the new birth." We have the following account of the same sermon, from one who was present as a hearer: "When he stood up in the open air, and began to sing, I knew not what it meant. I however drew near to listen, and thought the prayer was the best I ever heard, though rather short. He then read his text, and began in a sententious manner, to address his remarks to the understanding and consciences of the people; and I thought all who were present must be constrained to say, 'It is good for us to be here.' All the while the people were gathering he continued this mode of address, and presented us with such a variety of beautiful images, that I thought he must have been at infinite pains to crowd so many things into his memory. But when he entered upon the subject-matter of his text, it was such an easy,

natural flow of expression, and in such a tone of voice, that I could not refrain from weeping; and many others were affected in the same way. When he was done, and we had an opportunity of expressing our views to each other, it was agreed that such a man had not visited New England since the days of Whitefield. I heard him again, and thought I could follow him to the ends of the earth.\* At the close of the service, Mr. Lee gave notice, that he would preach at the same place on that day two weeks. But the people were so pleased with his sermon, they requested him to meet at the town-house the next time. To this arrangement he readily consented. It would seem, however, that with all the pleasure derived from his sermon, none of his hearers felt free enough to invite him to partake of the hospitality of their houses. The closing notice of this occasion indicates that his only welcome was such as is excited by the expectation of gain—"who knows but I shall yet have a place in this town where I may lay my head." This, however, was a small matter with Mr. Lee. In the fullest sense of the words, he could say with the Apostle, "I seek not yours, but you." And he was but too happy if he might impart unto them his spiritual things, irrespective of any carnal return.

Having made his arrangement for regular preaching in Norwalk, he departed early the next morning, and rode to Fairfield. Here, while seeking permission to preach in the Court-House, he was, in two instances, asked if he had a liberal education, and with his characteristic shrewdness replied, to both of his interrogators, that he had nothing to boast of, though he believed he had enough to carry him through the country! After securing the Court-House, under the assurance that no one would come to hear him preach, and waiting until after the time appointed, with a very good prospect of realizing the truth of the assurance, he went and opened the house, and sat down to wait the issue with all the patience he could summon to his aid. "At length," he says, "the schoolmaster and three or four women came; I began to sing, and in a little time thirty or forty collected." To this company he preached on Rom. vi. 23: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* A deep solemnity sat on the

\* This is copied from Mem. of Rev. T. Ware, pp. 206-9, who obtained it from the individual himself.



faces of the people, and they were ready to say,—“we never heard it after this fashion.” On reaching Fairfield, he had stopped at a tavern. His landlady was one of his hearers, and her heart, like Lydia’s, seems to have been opened. He prayed with her family that night; and the next day, she not only refused to receive any remuneration, but insisted on his calling again on his next visit to the place. On his departure she begged him to call on her sister, Mrs. Wheeler, a few miles distant from Fairfield, and gave him a letter of introduction. Here he found a few “prepared of the Lord” whose hearts were rejoiced to see him. They were waiting for the consolation of Israel, and lo, God had sent his servant to guide them in the way of peace. He learned from this lady that there “were a few that met once a week to sing and pray together, but they were much discouraged by their elder friends, and that they had been praying for some one to come and instruct them.” It is not surprising that they believed God had sent his servant “to teach them the way of the Lord more perfectly.” He preached for them, and from subsequent conversation was convinced that a good work was commenced in their hearts—one, he believed, had been “born anew of the Spirit.” The Rev. Mr. Black, one of Mr. Wesley’s Missionaries in Nova Scotia, had passed through and preached in this neighbourhood some years previous to this visit of Mr. Lee, and to this he ascribes the religious awakening he found among the people.

Leaving these earnest seekers after “the good and the right way,” he pursued his journey, and on Saturday, the 20th, arrived in New Haven. On Sunday afternoon he preached in the Court-House on Amos v. 6: *Seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live.* A sudden storm prevented all, but a few, females from attending, but a large number of men were present. Among these he mentions the President of the College, and many of the students, and one Congregational minister. He spoke as if fully persuaded God would open the hearts of the people by the discourse. The people paid great attention, and, as seems to have been a very common practice, freely expressed their satisfaction. Indeed, they praised and censured according as they liked or disliked the character of his sermons, and the doctrines he preached.

He next visited Reading. Here he was invited to stay at the

house of Mr. Bartlett, a Congregational minister. But he had to undergo an examination relative to the doctrines he preached, and was then informed that he could not be invited to preach in "the meeting-house, because he held doctrines," as the minister thought, "contrary to the gospel." He was neither surprised nor offended at the refusal to grant what had not been solicited. He however obtained permission to preach in the school-house. And he preached with gracious freedom from Isa. lv. 6 : *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, &c.* The old minister, at whose house he lodged, was a great advocate for dancing, although he did not practise it himself. In this the old minister, unless he plead the infirmities of age as an obstacle, was very inconsistent, for surely it could not have been wrong in him, if it was right in others; and he ought not to have recommended others to do what he was unwilling to do himself!

At Stratfield, on the 3d of July, he preached in the house of Deacon Hawley, to as many as could be crowded into the house. He had great satisfaction in preaching; and the word of the Lord seemed to have free course. He found some earnest worshippers at this place. About a dozen of them were in the habit of meeting together once a week, for religious conversation and prayer. Some of these belonged to the Church of England, and others were Congregationalists. They requested Mr. Lee to meet with them in the evening of the day on which he preached; to which he consented, and converted the meeting into a class-meeting—somewhat to the surprise, but greatly to the edification of those who were present. At its close, some of them thanked him for his good advice, and begged to be remembered in his prayers. And the Deacon's wife communicated the gratifying intelligence that some of them intended to enter into the fellowship of the Methodist Church. It was in Stratfield that the first Methodist Society was formed in New England. This important event in the religious history of Connecticut took place on the 26th of September, 1789. On this occasion he had preached, at night, on John x. 27 : *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* In this sermon, as he had been frequently accused of not "preaching his principles," he determined to introduce that sound doctrine, peculiar to the Methodists, the possibility of falling from grace.

He spoke at length upon the subject, and was listened to with patient attention. He then held a kind of class-meeting, and spoke to about twenty persons; after which, he notified them of his purpose to establish a Society in the place. "The next morning, three women joined in class, and appeared willing to bear the cross, and have their names cast out as evil, for the Lord's sake." With this little Society, he often had sweet seasons of religious joy. Engaged as he was in opening the way of Methodism into new places, he had but little opportunity of enjoying those means of grace so common among his brethren, and so refreshing to a spiritual mind. It is not surprising, therefore, to find his soul swelling with holy rapture when, some nine months after the event just recorded, he was permitted again to meet this little class in the true fellowship of Christian love. On this occasion he writes: "I met the class, and found a sweet sense of the love of God in my soul, while the people were telling of the love of God to them. O! how I love the Methodists! I have not seen a class-meeting for nearly three months; I often feel a wish to be always among the Methodists; and yet I am content to go before, and try and open the way for others to follow. Lord Jesus, go with me to the ends of the earth, and save me from sin to the end of my life. Amen and amen!"

Previous to the formation of the Society in Stratfield, much had been said to prejudice the people against the Methodists, and to prevent the success of Mr. Lee, in the ministry of reconciliation. A great deal of evil was circulated respecting the character of the Methodists and the nature of their doctrines. Preachers and people were excited and alarmed. The pulpit opened its mouth, and soundly belaboured what its minister called the "damnable principles" of Methodism.\* In their imaginations, they already saw their large and flourishing society uprooted, and Methodism securely resting upon its foundations; and all this, as the man of their fears rather sarcastically expresses it, *because two women talk of joining our Society!* It was not without good reason that

\* Some time subsequent to this, one of these ministers informed his congregation that there were "six hundred Methodist Preachers going through the country, preaching damnable doctrines, and picking men's pockets." The passions of this man must have been greatly excited!

he added, "Surely, if these people knew that God was on their side, they would not fear so much."

The next day, July 4th, under a variety of strange and perplexing temptations, he went to Stratford. He felt a strong desire to "pass by on the other side," and not open his commission there. But he resisted the temptation and went, and found less difficulty than usual in procuring a place to preach. Indeed, they rung the Church bell,\* and insisted on his going into the meeting-house to preach. But he declined, and held the meeting in the town-house. His text was, Eph. v. 1: *Be ye followers of God as dear children.* He mentions, as somewhat out of the ordinary course of things, the fact of being invited to a private house after preaching: "When I was done, Mr. Curtis came to me, and asked me to go and lodge with him, and wished me to make it my home. Another said he would conduct me to the house, and taking me by the hand, he walked all the way by my side. I don't know," he adds, "that I have had so much kindness showed to me in a new place, since I came to the state." It is an unfortunate fact, but historical verity requires it to be told, that this "milk of human kindness," that so delighted Mr. Lee, so far from yielding a rich and generous cream, had, by the time of his next visit, curdled and turned sour. He says, he "rode to Stratford, and put up at Solomon Curtis' as usual. When I went in his wife did not ask me to sit down. Her husband came in and spoke to me, but did not appear so friendly as formerly. At dark, I asked Mrs. C. if her husband was going to meeting? She said 'she guessed not.' So I went to the town-house alone, and was hard put to it to get a candle, but I bless God, I felt quite resigned, and not ashamed to own my Lord. After preaching, I returned to Mr. C.'s, and found he had but little to say. He went to prayer without saying anything to me, and then I waited to see if he would ask me to go to bed. After some time he got up, and asked me to cover up the fire when I went to bed!" Now that was scurvy treatment. But it did not disturb the quiet serenity of Mr. Lee's mind. His only remark upon the

\* Mr. Lee, throughout this part of his narrative, makes a distinction between Church and Meeting-House: The former denotes the Church of England, the latter Congregationalism.

subject exhibits his own equable temper, and constitutes a severe but just reflection upon the prejudice and bigotry of those among whom he had gone preaching the Kingdom of God. "I often wonder," he says, in noting this ill-treatment in his Journal—"I often wonder that I am not turned out of doors!!" The only reason for this exhibition of unkindness is to be traced to the fact that Mr. Lee believed in the possibility of falling from grace! Mr. Curtis differed with him; and therefore felt at liberty to show the exuberance of his own gracious feelings, by an act of deliberate and graceless maltreatment of a Christian brother! This specimen of Antinomian spitefulness did not succeed, however, in forcing Mr. Lee from the house at that late hour of the night, nor did it stop without a further manifestation of its selfishness. It kept him in bed till a late hour the next morning, and then he suffered the man of God to depart "without family prayer or breakfast." With our knowledge of Mr. Lee's simple independence of character, we can only account for his submission to such treatment upon the supposition that he hoped for an opportunity of bringing his erring brother to a better sense of his duty as a man and a Christian.

A few days after this humiliating affair, and with a very immaterial variation in his reception, he preached in Greenwich. He made "no appointment for a second visit, *for no one desired it.*" "The Priest and Deacon of the place," to use his own words, have "taken much pains to convince the people of the evil of letting me preach in the parish; and withal they told the people that if the society is broken up, they must bear the blame. Poor priests! they seem like frightened sheep whenever I come near them. There are about forty-five of them in the bounds of my two weeks, circuit, and the general cry is, 'the societies will be broken up.'" There must have been a very strong sense of the weakness of their cause, and the insufficiency, if not the unsoundness of their doctrines, to have produced a fear of disruption so very general and alarming. But, as if private efforts were found too feeble to counteract the success of Mr. Lee in turning the attention of the people from the flatteries of a quiet Antinomianism to the active obedience of justifying faith, the pulpit must open its mouth in warning against the Preacher, and in denunciation of his doctrines. It became a somewhat common practice to occupy the Sabbath with

sermons intended to forestal the usefulness of this pioneer of a purer faith among the decaying Churches of New England. But, as is nearly always the case, this opposition turned out to "the furtherance of the gospel." The prejudiced attacks of the pastors only had the effect upon the minds of the people of creating a greater anxiety to hear and judge for themselves. They brought larger congregations to his ministry, and predisposed the hearts of the people for, at least, a charitable examination of the points at issue between the parties. And when, under the influence of such feelings, they gave heed to the word of the gospel as he preached it, the issue was decidedly adverse to the principles in which they had been trained. These oppositions were not courted by Mr. Lee, nor did he shun them. It was rather a ground of rejoicing that he was counted worthy of suffering for the sake of Christ.

Within a few days after his adventure in Greenwich, he preached in Weston, to a very crowded congregation. He attributed the size of the congregation to the fact that, on the two preceding Sabbaths, the minister had preached against him. The people heard him with great attention. And he records it as a fact of which he seems to have had a large experience,—“I generally find, in this state, when I am most opposed, I have most hearers. The Lord seems to bring good out of evil. If my sufferings will tend to the furtherance of the gospel, I think I feel willing to suffer. But if I had no confidence in God, and as many to oppose me, I believe I should soon leave these parts. But once in a while I meet with something to encourage me, and by the grace of God I stand.” And he might have added, if I had as little confidence in the truth and stability of the doctrines I preach, as those who oppose me have in theirs, I should quit preaching them altogether! On a subsequent visit to this place he preached from Matt. xxii. 14: *For many are called, but few are chosen.* The opposing ministers generally accused him of concealing his principles, because for the most part his discourses were on Christian experience and practical duties. On this occasion he had an unusually large number of hearers, and among them two ministers—a Baptist and a Congregationalist, the former sitting at his side, the other just before him. Under these circumstances he stated and defended these propositions, as the doctrine of the text: I. That all men are called to forsake

their sins. II. That with this call, the gracious power of obedience is given to the sinner. And III. That men are called before they are chosen. This was a point-blank shot at Calvinism, and took effect in the very centre of its creed, if we may judge from the effects upon its defenders who were present. They were ill at ease during the sermon; and at its close, betrayed their dread of its influence. The Baptist minister started up, and immediately commenced an attack upon the Preacher; the Congregationalist reached the door with a bound, turned, and gave notice that "he should set himself in order against the next Sabbath-day to expose the errors the people had just heard." The former was rebuked and silenced by two old men who were present; the latter was suffered to depart as quietly as his own hasty spirit would allow. An incident that occurred soon after this will serve, in some measure, to show the impression made by the sermon on the minds of the people. A tinker came to Weston in search of work; and, on inquiring into the probability of finding employment in the place, was told that the Methodists were likely to beat a hole through the Saybrook Platform, and if he could mend that, and could stay long enough, he might be employed. Another proof of the good produced by this discourse of Mr. Lee, is seen in the fact that he soon had more invitations to preach than he could possibly accept; and a great many strong and warm-hearted friends were secured to the cause he was labouring to establish.

There is sunlight as well as shade in the history of these efforts to plant Methodism in the cold and sterile soil of Connecticut. Mr. Lee was sometimes the subject of kind, and even brotherly treatment. He could well appreciate these evidences of good feeling, although he did not allow them to interfere with his zeal and faithfulness. He knew his own duties, and felt all the responsibilities of his position. It was under the influence of pure motives, and after mature deliberation, that he undertook to spread scriptural holiness among the descendants of the Pilgrims; and he had too much confidence in the truth and sufficiency of the gospel, to be turned aside from his path by the opposition of unreasonable and wicked men. After all, it was by faith he stood, and by grace he was strengthened and kept. A believer in the promise—"My presence shall go with thee"—he was always looking for proofs of

the presence and power of God, and as these were mercifully vouchsafed, so he rejoiced to acknowledge every manifestation of Divine assistance, whether in the experience of his own heart, or in the effect of his ministry upon others. "I bless God," he writes "that He yet keeps my spirits up under all my discouragements. If the Lord did not comfort me in hoping against hope, or believing against appearances, I should depart from the work in this part of the world; but I still wait to see the salvation of the Lord." And he did see it!

On Sunday, the 5th of July, in the afternoon, he was again in New Haven. His appointment was in the State-House; but, after the ringing of the bell, some of the influential men insisted on his going to the Meeting-House, and he consented. He preached on Job xxii. 21: *Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace, &c.* On this occasion, he preached with considerable freedom of thought and feeling, and there was some manifestation of interest and feeling among the people. He believed the word had reached their hearts, and he was encouraged. Among his hearers, he mentions "two Congregational ministers, Mr. Austin, the minister of the house, and Dr. Edwards, son of the former President of Princeton College." After preaching, he says: "Some told me they were much pleased with the discourse; but no man asked me home with him." He returned to the tavern—he *was sure of a welcome there!* He felt himself at once placed too remote from the people for practical usefulness; but he knew the hearts of all men were in the hand of God, and he retired to his room to draw nigh to Him in prayer for His blessing, and for access to the hearts of the people. It was not in vain. His soul was refreshed, and he arose from his knees, satisfied that God had sent him to the place, and that his way would be opened to the families of the people. He desired this *solely* because of its importance to the success of his mission among them. It was but a little while after leaving his closet, before a gentleman came to take him to his house, and gave him the freedom of it whenever he might visit the place! At the house of this gentleman he saw what was a novel sight to him, but was not uncommon to the times or the people among whom he was labouring. It was on Sunday, yet "after dark, a young woman got her work and sat down to knitting. I



was, indeed, much astonished at this, and spoke to her about it. They told me it was customary for the Congregationalists throughout the state to commence the Sabbath on Saturday evening, and continue it until sunset on Sunday." This may have satisfied him as to the custom; but he must have believed there was "a more excellent way."

At New Down, on the 7th of July, at the request of the people, he preached in the Meeting-House. The discourse was founded on Mark viii. 36: *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* He supposed there were more persons present than ordinarily attended on the Sabbath. It was a plain and pointed discourse on the loss of the soul. He spoke at length and with earnestness upon "the torments of the damned"—their awful punishment, and its abiding duration! It was, perhaps, not usual for the people to listen to such subjects, or to have them treated in a style so ardent and affectionate. But, in obedience to the rule of his Church, Mr. Lee first tried to adapt his subject to his congregation, and then to cleave to his text, and "make out what he took in hand." It was with reference to the character of his sermon for warning, that, in a brief notice of it, he says: "I did not give them velvet-mouth preaching, though I had a large velvet cushion under my hands."

During his first visit to Reading, Mr. Lee stopped at the house of the Rev. Mr. Bartlett, although he was denied the liberty of preaching in the Meeting-House. On his next visit to the place, July the 8th, the people importuned the minister to allow him to occupy his pulpit. This he refused; but was very anxious for Mr. Lee to "take a text and preach his principles fully." This was declined, for the reason that he did not believe a controversial sermon would be so conducive to the glory of God, and the spiritual good of his hearers, as one on the subject of practical godliness. Finding he could not engage Mr. Lee in a fruitless controversy, he rather abruptly introduced and denied the doctrine of Christian perfection, as either a duty of religion or a privilege of experience. The reply to this was in a form that expressed a doubt whether any "religious man could say there is no perfection in this life; for, to deny perfection, was to deny the Bible and all revealed religion." The addition of several passages of Scripture effectually

silenced the minister, and left Mr. Lee in full possession of the field. He says, his sermon on the possibility of being suddenly changed from a state of sin to a state of grace, gave great offence. At his next visit to this place, if he did not preach his own principles fully, he did not spare those of his opposers. "I did not spare Calvinism," he writes, "but bore a solemn testimony against the doctrine which prevails in this part of the world, which in substance is this: 'The sinner must repent, and can't repent; and he will go to hell if he don't repent;' or, as a lawyer expressed it in my hearing, 'You must believe, or be damned; and you can't believe, if you are to be damned.' But," he adds, "some of these people begin to see that something must be done before justification;\* though some of the preachers teach that a sinner cannot repent until he is born again." After witnessing the effects of such teaching upon the people, it is not surprising that Mr. Lee should pray—"From this doctrine, good Lord, deliver us!"

After preaching in this place for several months, the seed took root and gave back its ripe fruit to the sower. The opposition to his ministry was greatly increased, but this only served to strengthen his confidence and augment his zeal. "The Lion begins to roar very loud in this place," he says, "a sure sign that he is about to lose some of his subjects." Under date of the 28th of December, 1789, he writes: "I joined two in Society for a beginning; a man who has lately received the witness of his being in the favour of the Lord, led the way, and a woman, who I hope was lately converted, followed. Glory be to God! I now begin to see some fruit of my labour in this barren part of the world; several in this place feel the want of a Saviour." For some time these two stood alone, "persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed." Very soon after the formation of this Society, the minister of the place set himself in violent opposition to the Methodists, cautioning the people against hearing them preach,—but they did not take his advice, as Mr. Lee judged from the multitude that came to hear him, the day after they received the caution! In a few months the Society was increased, and four of its members became minis-

\* By this expression, as is evident from its contrast with the system he was opposing, Mr. Lee intends only to say that repentance and faith necessarily precede the justification of a sinner.

ters of the manifold grace of God. It is a singular fact that, when Mr. Lee first visited Reading, these four individuals, one of whom was a lawyer, were personal friends, in habits of unrestrained intimacy, and accustomed to entertain each other with expensive feasts. Hearing of Mr. Lee's intention to preach, they went to the place; more, it seems, for the gratification of an idle curiosity than for any other reason, unless it mingled with a purpose to find some new stimulant for the mirth of their social intercourse. On their way to the place, one of them said, "Mr. Methodist, you would not come here to preach, if you knew whom you had to preach to." When they saw the Preacher, another said, "he looked like a good-natured fellow, but guessed he did not know much." After he had been preaching awhile, a third said he did know something; then, he knew as much as their own minister; presently, he knew more; and finally, their minister knew nothing; and they verily believed their minister had reached the same conclusion with themselves. The word of God had taken such effect on the hearts of these men, that they were not only satisfied that they had never heard anything on this fashion before, but felt that they knew nothing as they ought to know. They were convinced of their ungodliness, resolved to forsake their evil ways, and lead new lives; and were soon and happily brought to a realization of God's power to save, entered into the fellowship of His people, and became preachers of the righteousness of faith. It deserves also to be mentioned that the family of Mr. Sanford, the first member of the Methodist Church in Reading, has been greatly blessed of God. Most of his children have been made partakers of like precious faith with their father; and one son and three grandsons have been called of God to preach all the words of this life to guilty and dying men.\*

On the 29th of July, he was again in Fairfield; and preached on John v. 40, to a larger congregation than had yet waited on his ministry in the place. For this, as in other places, he was indebted, in part, to the public opposition of the minister. His only notice of this hostility was in the utterance of the opinion that he might give them yet greater cause of complaint, as he intended to

\* These facts are given upon the authority of the author of "The Supernumerary; or, Lights and Shadows of the Itinerancy," in the Christian Advocate and Journal, New York, December 27, 1843.

continue his visits, and to form a Church, if, from the success of his ministry, there should be occasion to do so. The probability of such an event had taken such hold upon the fears of the people, that one of them asked him if the formation of a Methodist Society was not the particular object of his preaching in the place? Mr. Lee was not a man to conceal a matter of this kind, and although he was sensible of the opposition it might produce, he nevertheless met the question with a prompt and open-hearted reply: "I told him my particular object was to call sinners to repentance; but if the Lord blessed my labours among the people, and they desired to join us, I could not forbid them." This was honest, but (and the fact will serve to show the nature of the opposition he had constantly, and in every place, to meet) it well-nigh cost him the loss of his home in the place. Of his next appointment, he writes: "Some of the inhabitants seemed to be afraid to hear (though present), because the minister does not like my coming among them. Even the tavern-keeper and his wife, where I always put up, made an excuse to leave home before I came, and, as I understood, because the minister complained of them for entertaining me!" At the same time another complaint was lodged against him. The women complained that he preached so loud it made their heads ache! and they wished him to speak a little lower the next time he came. Perilous times had indeed come. Minister, men, women, all against the itinerant evangelist! But he received the communication with the gravity of a philosopher, and, with the meekness of a Christian, replied—"I hope God will help me hereafter to speak so as to make their hearts ache!" And yet, at the expiration of half-a-year, he was praying for "seals to his ministry in Fairfield—a *poor hardened place*." It forms a striking illustration of the social habits of the people that, after preaching there for six or seven months, he records, with gratitude, and as an indication of good, the fact of being invited to the house of "a widow woman." It was the first invitation he had received! Nor is it a less forcible illustration of his own character that, in connexion with this humiliating proof of the selfishness of the people, and under all the discouragements it implies, his own heart was cheerful and contented. "I love to break up new ground, and seek the lost souls in New England," he writes, in immediate con-

nexion with the notice of the widow's invitation, "although it is hard work : But when Christ is with me, hard things are made easy, and rough ways are made smooth." Some months later, in speaking of a sermon preached in Fairfield, he says : "The Lord was in our midst, and the hearts of some were touched ; they were constrained to hang their heads and weep." An old man gave him credit on this occasion for "preaching just as their ministers used to preach when they were lively in religion." Another assured him he would never lack hearers, if he continued to preach as he had done heretofore. In the midst of a profusion of compliments it was his sincere prayer to "be kept humble when esteemed, and faithful when despised."

In Greenfield, on Thursday, the 30th of July, Mr. Lee called on Doctor Dwight, at his school, and conversed with him upon the expediency of preaching in the place, and whether or not he could obtain a house to preach in. But the ardent desire of his heart to call sinners to repentance found no corresponding sympathy in the breast of the Doctor. He had no house to offer, and no encouragement to extend to the system of doing good in which Mr. Lee was engaged. Yet he notified Mr. Lee that if he preached in the place he should come to hear him, not to countenance his efforts in saving sinners, but to see if there was anything wrong in his doctrines or his measures, that he might the more successfully oppose its success among the people. Such is the spirit that everywhere withstood the Apostle of Methodism in New England.

A singular incident is connected with the introduction of Methodism into Bridgeport, which goes very far to confirm the impression of Mr. Lee that he was providentially designated for the work upon which he had entered in Connecticut. One afternoon a Mrs. Wells was at the house of her neighbour, Mrs. Wheeler, taking tea ; and stated that during the preceding night she had dreamed that a man rode up to a house in which she was, got off his horse, took his saddle-bags on his arm, and walking directly into the house, said, "I am a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I have come to preach to the people of this place. If you will call your neighbours together, I will preach to them to-night." She moreover said, that she retained so vivid and perfect a recollection of the man's face and general appearance, that she

should certainly know him if she should ever see him. She then entered into a particular description of the preacher she had seen in her dream. While she was yet speaking, she looked through the window, and exclaimed, "Why, there is the man now!" And it was so. Mr. Lee rode up, dismounted, took his saddle-bags on his arm, entered the house, and addressing himself to the women, said, "I am a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have come to preach to the people of this place. If you will call your neighbours together, I will preach to them to-night." He was welcomed to the house; and that night preached the first sermon ever delivered in that part of Connecticut by a Methodist preacher. The house stood on what was then called Mutton Lane, and Mr. Lee, in relating the circumstance, would sometimes say, he preached in a house in Mutton Lane, and the Lord gave him three ewe lambs—two of these were Mrs. Wells and Mrs. Wheeler.\* This incident is no less striking as an exhibition of ministerial fidelity and perseverance, than it is remarkable as another instance of that supernatural agency which has presided over the progress of the gospel from the beginning. Let the fact as to the dream be admitted, and it does not challenge a reasonable doubt, and it cannot be accounted for except by a recurrence to the truly *spiritual* dispensation under which we live. In all the essential particulars there is no real difference between this case and that of St. Paul, when he was invited to "come over into Macedonia." In both, "God spoke in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man."

The preceding notices will suffice to show the nature of Mr. Lee's labours on this circuit, and the character of the opposition and the trials he had to endure. They might be multiplied, but they would swell the work into a magnitude that would prevent a just regard to the concurrent history of the Church. And besides, we shall have to recur to similar transactions in noticing Mr. Lee's progress in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Maine, and also in Rhode Island and Vermont; for, in these several states, he was the pioneer of Methodism. Nor, perhaps, will it tend to edification, to show how in one place he, in common with his brethren, was represented as a false prophet—one of the very

\* This account is copied from an editorial letter of the Rev. T. E. Bond, in the Christian Advocate and Journal.

class that should come in the last days; or, in another, that he preached for three months without being invited to a house, or even forming an acquaintance with an individual; or how, after preaching to a large congregation, in another, he was left to seek shelter where he could find it, and rode through a storm, with, to use his own words, "my soul transported with joy, the snow falling, the wind blowing, prayer ascending, faith increasing, grace descending, heaven smiling, and love abounding." In the presence of such a man, with such a spirit, opposition was utterly ineffectual. Hunger and thirst, cold scorn, and insulting neglect, could not move him from his purpose. A priesthood, entrenched behind special legislation, and conscious of their power; a people leavened with Antinomianism, and full of disputation; could not quench the fire of his love, nor resist the power of his words. He went to plant the tree of Methodism in the sterile soil of New England,—and he did it, and thousands of happy souls have found shelter and comfort under its branches.

In the month of September 1789, Mr. Lee made an excursion into Rhode Island, and preached in several places. He found pious people during this brief visit, who cordially received him, and gave earnest heed to his preaching. At one place he met with a congregation of Seventh-day Baptists, whose singular mode of worship, though surprising, was not offensive to his mind, nor without a good effect upon his feelings. After closing his sermon at Charleston, he says: "They began according to their custom; and after singing, one said, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; and now you are all at liberty to speak.' So they began to speak, one at a time; and several spoke, both men and women, during the evening. In the first place they generally gave an account of their feelings, and the state of their souls; and would then express their sentiments respecting the sermon; and observed they believed God had sent me to preach to them; and exhorted all the people, as well as the preacher, to go on in the ways of the Lord; and sometimes they would call aloud, 'O, my neighbour (calling the person by name), come to the Lord Jesus Christ.' And at other times, 'O, my brother! don't you feel for poor sinners?' All this they sung out in such a tone, that I could scarcely refrain from weeping. There has been a great revival

of religion amongst them. They baptize none but believers, and their mode is plunging." "To the pure, all things are pure." The piety of these people furnished Mr. Lee with an ample apology for any seeming extravagance or confusion in the mode of their religious exercises.

Under date of the 7th, he says: "To-day I have preached four times, and felt better at the conclusion of my labour than I did when I first arose in the morning. I have found a great many Baptists in this part of the country, who are lively in religion. They are mostly different from those I have been heretofore acquainted with; for these will let men of all persuasions commune with them, if they believe they are in favour with the Lord. I think the way is now open for our Preachers to visit this state. It is the wish of many that I should stay, and they beg that I would return again as soon as possible, although they never saw a Methodist Preacher before."

Although Mr. Lee had, by the appointment of Conference, a colleague, yet he never appeared in the field; and it was not until February 1790, that he had any one to assist in the arduous duty of opening a pathway for Methodism in the land of the Pilgrims. In this month, while holding a Quarterly Meeting at Dan Town, he heard that three of his brethren were coming to his help. On hearing this his heart responded—"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And when he saw them in the distance, he said, "Thou hast well done, that thou art come!" The brethren who had come to join him in his trying work, were Jacob Brush, an Elder, and George Roberts and Daniel Smith, junior Preachers. This was a joyful day to Mr. Lee. "No one knows but God and myself," he writes, "what comfort and joy I felt at their arrival. Surely the Lord has had respect unto my prayers, and granted my requests." Leaving Mr. Brush to supply his appointments on the Stamford circuit, and taking Mr. Smith, he struck out a larger circuit, and pressed into "the regions beyond." In a few weeks he succeeded in forming the New Haven circuit, for one Preacher, embracing one hundred and twenty miles in circumference, and having seventeen appointments, to be filled in fourteen days. This circuit "extended along the post road from Milford to Hartford." In December of the preceding year, Mr.



Lee had spent two days in Hartford, and preached several times to large and attentive congregations, and he was encouraged to hope for success in making some who "were not a people, the people of God." On the 14th of March, while in Weathersfield, he met with two friends from Hartford, who informed him that the Lord was reviving his work in that place, and importuned him to repeat his visit. On reaching the city he found lodgings provided for him, and was rejoiced to learn that his former visit had been blessed to the awakening of several persons. This information humbled his soul, but it strengthened his faith, and gave a new impulse to his zeal. He forthwith commenced preaching and visiting, and he had free access to the hearts and homes of the people. Many attended his ministry, sought his advice, and begged his prayers. In the month of November a class was formed in the place, but owing to the removal of some of the principal members, the little Society was not long after scattered abroad.

Leaving Hartford, they rode to Farmington, and had been but a little while in the house of their host, before he began, according to the custom, an examination of the principles of his guests. He was a violent advocate of the "infallible Perseverance of the Saints," and avowed it as his belief that "if David had died in the act of adultery, and Peter while swearing, they would have been saved."

"Then," said Mr. Lee, "after a man is converted, he is obliged to be saved;—he can't help it?"

"Yes, he is obliged to be saved whether he will or no; for it is impossible for him to help it. And," he added, "I would as soon hear you curse God at once, as to hear you say that God would give his love to a person, and then take it away again!"

"I do not say God will take his love from them, but they may cast it away."

"If God sent the leprosy upon a man," it was replied, "no one but God could take it away."

"So," said Mr. Lee, "you think religion and leprosy much the same—*sent as a judgment upon a person!*"

This just application of his argument silenced, but did not satisfy the host; and he was so displeased at his discomfiture, that he abruptly refused to give Mr. Lee and his companion the necessary directions to find their next stopping-place. These controversial

disputations were forced upon Mr. Lee. For awhile after commencing his ministry in New England, he hesitated to converse or preach upon the points at issue between his own doctrinal belief and that of the people. His feelings, and his desire to win souls to Christ, prompted him to take this course. But he soon discovered the necessity of altering his determination upon the subject. The pulpits rung with doctrines antagonist to his course and his creed; and these were re-echoed and prolonged with every shade of hostility in every family circle he entered. If he hesitated, it was construed into fear to avow his principles; if he remained silent, it was a surrender of his faith; if he declined a discussion, it was because his doctrines were so unsound he was afraid to avow them. Under these circumstances he was compelled to dispute, and, to say nothing of the perfect truth and consistency of his doctrinal belief, which gave him a positive advantage, he was too calm in his feelings, too clear in his perceptions of truth, and too sound in his convictions, not to succeed in silencing, if not in convincing his opponents.

A few days after the occurrence just related, on his way to Bolton, he fell in company with a man who soon began to talk about the temporal condition of Hartford. Mr. Lee gave the conversation a religious direction by remarking that the people of Hartford only needed two things to make them comfortable—a little more money and a little more grace. The man then informed Mr. Lee that on the preceding Monday night, two preachers who had come from the South, had preached in Hartford, but, he added, *they had brought no new thing*. He was told it was not the preachers' business to teach new things, but to preach "the old things" written in the gospel. His reply, and it will serve to illustrate the feelings of the individual, as well as to place the *manner* of Methodist preaching in contrast with that of the settled clergy, was in substance, "these preachers speak louder than our ministers, and raise their heads, and spread their hands, and hollow, as though they were trying to frighten the people." The remark, "it would be well if they could frighten the people out of their sins," may have surprised him, but he parted from his companion without seeming to suspect that he was conversing with one of the men of whom he had spoken so contemptuously. It will show Mr.

Lee's delight in his duties, as well as his desire to be always employed, to state that the next day, after several ineffectual attempts to find a place to preach in, he stopped at a small village, and on inquiring for a house, was told there was a man in the place who said he was ready to starve for the want of preaching. Well, said Mr. Lee, this is the place for me; for I am ready to starve for somebody to preach to. He preached, and was blessed.

At East Windsor he preached on Saturday night, the 3d of April, and again, the next morning at eight o'clock. He found it very difficult to obtain a place for preaching; he sought permission at several private houses; underwent, in the course of the afternoon, two very close doctrinal examinations; and it was not until nearly dark, and after assuring them he made it a point to take no denial, that he could give notice of the time and place of preaching. This he had to do himself; and the school-house was full of people, who gave good heed to the word spoken. These trials were constant, but they did not become common to Mr. Lee. He was impelled by a strong and prevailing sense of duty to the course he pursued, else he would have retired in disgust and despair from the presence of a people rude by habit, and only courteous when it was manifestly discreditable to be otherwise. Yet it forms a striking contrast between the selfish *doctrinalism*, if we may make a word, of the people, and the absorbing spiritualism of Mr. Lee, to find him in connexion with these trials declaring: "I very frequently find that after a heavy cross, I meet with great comfort. If I could have the comfort without the cross, I should be glad; but if the comfort is equal to the cross, as it often is with me, I wish for a heavy cross; for I do sincerely long for great comfort."

Thursday, the 8th of April, 1789, was observed as a fast-day throughout the state. It is presumable Mr. Lee regarded it with appropriate devotional feelings. It is certain he *watched* on the occasion, and he reports the mode of keeping fast-day in Connecticut in 1789, which, whatever the appointment may say for the religious feelings of the people, says very little in behalf of their fleshly mortification. "The manner of fasting, in general, is to eat a hearty breakfast, as usual, then attend public worship in the forenoon and afternoon, without eating any dinner, and then have supper before night: so those that keep the fast, eat *but two meals* between sun-

rise and sunset." It can be no very intolerable self-denial to fast twelve hours, on two hearty meals! Such fasting would compromise all the rules of spiritual warfare. All occasion for the flesh lusting *against* the spirit would be removed; and sensuality would lie down and be still in the very breast of devotion!

After preaching in Suffield, on Friday, the 9th, a Baptist preacher, who had heard his sermon, entered into conversation with Mr. Lee, and attempted to carry him through an examination, not upon principles, as was customary, but as to his "conversion and call to the ministry."\* He declined entering into a full statement of the matter, upon the ground of its occupying too much time, but consented to give a brief account; and began by saying,—“I sought the Lord, and found him.” These inoffensive words were too much for the doctrinal standard of the Baptist. He abruptly denied the correctness of any such statement, and vehemently protested, “that no man ever sought the Lord before he was regenerated, and that God was always found of them that sought him *not*.” And he waxed so warm, and so repeatedly and rudely interrupted Mr. Lee, in his attempts to speak, that some of the company interfered, and called him to order. “Well,” said he, “*we* are too warm!” This unjust imputation upon the patience of Mr. Lee was at once resisted as a species of persecution, as he, so far from becoming “too warm,” had not been allowed to speak even in reply to the questions of this self-constituted committee of examination; and he insisted, since he felt very calm, that his examiner must make confession for himself, and not for another. But although he convinced him of his impatience, he could not convict him of the erroneousness of his opinions: for he still insisted that “no man ever had a desire to be religious till he was born again.” Of one thing, however, he convinced Mr. Lee,—“that his nature was too much like

\* The following anecdote, probably occurring here, has been long and generally credited. A minister, anxious to ascertain whether Mr. Lee had a liberal education, before giving his permission for him to preach in his Church, addressed some question to Mr. Lee, in Latin. A reply was returned in Dutch, such as Mr. Lee had learned in his early ministry in North Carolina. This greatly surprised the minister. He repeated it in Greek. It was again answered in Dutch. Not understanding the language, and supposing it to be Hebrew, of which he knew nothing, he concluded Mr. Lee knew more than himself, and granted him permission to preach in his Church.

his name; his name was Hastings, and his nature *hasty*." Such rudeness, though quite common, was not always confined to the social circle. He sometimes found "lewd fellows of the baser sort" in his congregations, disposed to insult the minister, and bring the service into contempt. With a man of Mr. Lee's intrepidity and great readiness of wit, it was not always a safe experiment. He sometimes saw, and heard, and felt, as though he was blind, and deaf, and insensible; but there were occasions when every sense was alive, and every faculty an instrument of rebuke and chastisement to those who made light of the doctrines he preached, or of the service in which he was engaged. On one occasion, after having preached several times in Middlefield, some men sitting in the gallery repeatedly annoyed the congregation by their profane levity. Mr. Lee bore with it till he was satisfied it would be wrong to submit any longer. But, just as he was about to raise his voice in rebuke, a new disturbance was created that attracted the attention of all. A panel of the front-door of the Church had been broken out, and, just at the moment referred to, three dogs darted through the opening, and, pursuing each other along the middle aisle up to the front of the pulpit, turned and retreated through the opening again. Before the congregation had recovered from the surprise of this singular interruption, the dogs were again coursing along the aisle, up to the pulpit, and back again through the door. The Preacher was motionless, the congregation in a state of uneasy excitement, provoked to laughter yet daring only to smile, the party of disturbers in the gallery overrunning with joy at the whole scene. In, again, came the dogs, hurrying and yelping along the aisle, and away into the yard again. "Well!" said Mr. Lee, raising his deep sonorous voice above the titter that was stealing from every lip of the assembly, and sending a quick, expressive glance of his eye among the original disturbers of the meeting,—"*the devil must have got into the dogs too!*" The gravity of his manner, the structure of his sentence, and the emphasis on its last word, brought the blood in burning blushes to their cheeks, and under the impression that they formed the focus of every eye in the congregation, they slunk into themselves and were still!

Mr. Lee continued to fill his regular appointments, and to seek new places of worship within the limits of the circuit he had

formed, until June, when he resolved to enlarge his borders, and penetrate fields where, as yet, nothing was known of Methodism but the strange and contradictory accounts of "rumour, with her hundred tongues." In conformity with this purpose, and with Boston as his main and remotest point, he entered upon a new and more arduous attempt to spread scriptural holiness in New England. It was not his design to form a regular circuit during this tour, but to ascertain the practicability of the thing, in order to submit his plans to Bishop Asbury, at the approaching session of the New York Conference; and, if it should be deemed encouraging, to press the importance of sending "forth labourers into the harvest." During this tour, he visited several places in Rhode Island and New Hampshire; going through the former state, and returning through the latter. After leaving his circuit, he preached in Windham, Norwich, New London, Stonington, Newport, Bristol, Providence, and various other places. In some of these places he found an open door, and a people prepared of the Lord. In Warren, he was invited to preach in the pulpits of several churches; and, in Providence, he preached five times in one house, and several times in the court-house; and, generally, he met with kind and courteous treatment. On the 9th of July he reached Boston, and at once sought a place where he might publish the word of salvation. But every effort was fruitless. He found no one to encourage him, or willing to render him any assistance in his benevolent enterprise. His urgent addresses only excited surprise; his persevering importunity was met by a provoking petulance or a contemptuous indifference. But these were not even new phases in the selfish hostility of the heart to the spirituality of the gospel. He had triumphed over it too frequently to be conquered by it now; and, if he might not have access to their houses, they could not exclude him from the Common. It would not be the first time that the horizon had composed the walls, and the sky the canopy of his temple; and here he could worship God with the unrestrained freedom of the heavenly service. Accordingly, on Saturday he gave notice of his intention to preach on the Common, on the afternoon of the ensuing Sabbath. At the time appointed, there were not many persons present. He took his stand on a table, and commenced singing one of the sweet songs of Zion. The neigh-

bouring streets poured forth their masses; and, when he commenced preaching, a living crowd, of between two and three thousand, gave solemn attention to his warning voice; and they were as still and quiet as if reposing upon the gaudy cushions of their stately city churches. On Monday morning he left Boston, discouraged but not disheartened; and he determined to try again. There were sinners in Boston, and the gospel was designed for their salvation; and he would not retire from the field without a heartier and more persevering endeavour to plant the truth in their hearts and Methodism in their city.

After leaving Boston, he preached in Salem, Ipswich, and Newburyport. In Salem he preached in one of the Churches, and was recommended by some one to call on the Rev. Mr. Murray, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Newburyport. Here, however, he met with a very cool reception. Learning that Mr. Lee was a Methodist, agreeing with Mr. Wesley in doctrine and Church polity, Mr. Murray "very politely offered to treat him as a gentleman, and a Christian, but not as a minister." He would not allow him to preach in his pulpit. His reason for this was as unworthy of his true calling, as it was creditable to the laborious zeal of Mr. Lee. He gave as a reason for his refusal, that he had been informed by letter, that a Methodist Preacher had lately been up the Connecticut River, and that he had held meetings in four different places in one day! This was a violation of all the rules of the Standing Order. It put Orthodoxy at fault, and was not to be tolerated by so staunch an advocate of the regular order of things as Mr. Murray. It made nothing in favour of the application of Mr. Lee, to be informed that the person guilty of this outrage upon the proper moderation and sobriety of the sacred office, was now in his presence, seeking an opportunity to expend some of his zeal in behalf of the sinners of Newburyport! And, although he was repulsed by the minister, he did not relinquish his purpose. After considerable labour he succeeded in obtaining permission to preach in the court-house, and having made an appointment to do so on a later day in the week, he departed on a brief tour in the adjacent places of New Hampshire. During this journey he preached in Portsmouth to a congregation of serious hearers, some of whom seemed to regard his visit and his ministry as a message sent from

God. At the appointed time he returned to Newburyport. A new difficulty awaited him. On his first visit the selectmen gave their consent for him to preach in the court-house, but during his absence three of them changed their minds, and now desired to prevent its occupancy. But, at the time appointed for preaching, many of the citizens assembled, and one of the selectmen being present, the door was opened, and he had a large and well-behaved congregation, many of whom wept under the word. He preached again the next morning at six o'clock, and although it was an almost unheard-of thing, yet many attended, and the solemn aspect of the people, their tears, and earnest attention, and his own feelings of joy and confidence, led him to trust he was sowing good seed, in good soil that would spring up and produce—in some, thirty; in some, sixty, and in some, an hundred-fold; in *all*,—fruit unto holiness.

Before leaving Newburyport, Mr. Lee, in company with Mr. Murray, who in this fulfilled his purpose to treat him as a gentleman, and the Rev. Mr. Marshall, visited the remains of the Rev. George Whitefield. These were deposited under the pulpit of the Church. Provided with a candle, they descended into the vault, and removing the coffin lid, beheld the awful ravages of “the last enemy of man.” How quiet the repose, how changed the features of the man whose impassioned eloquence had moved multitudes to tears of penitence, and the impulses of a new-born zeal for God! His face had lost its comeliness; the fire of his eye was extinct, and he lay like a mighty warrior quietly reposing after the strife of conquest and the shout of victory. Death was gradually reducing his corporeal substance to its primitive dust. His soul was gone, and his flesh, in the midst of decay, was resting in hope of a resurrection unto life—to find its complete and perfect satisfaction when it awakes in the likeness of Christ. Silently they gazed on the fallen warrior of Christ, and fervently did Mr. Lee pray that the inspiration that made Whitefield an ornament of the Church and a blessing to the world, might dwell in his heart, and consecrate and give direction and energy to the talents with which God had intrusted him. It was on a Sabbath morning, September the 30th, 1770, that this great man ceased from the toils and trials of



the earthly service, and entered upon the glorious worship of the upper temple. The memory of the just is blessed.

The day after his visit to the remains of Whitefield, he rode to the New Mills, and preached in the Baptist Meeting-House. While here, he received a letter from the Rev. Mr. Spaulding, of Salem, informing him that he had made an appointment for him to preach in his Church that evening. He went and gave them a plain, warm-hearted sermon. Providence was guiding his steps. After preaching in Salem, he was strongly importuned to visit and preach in Marblehead, and after duly weighing the matter, he accepted the invitation, and had cause to rejoice that he did so. Here his ministry was made a great blessing to the people, "some of whom were complaining of being almost starved for the word!"

It was now Saturday. A week had elapsed since he preached in Boston. In this time he had travelled about one hundred and thirty miles, and preached ten sermons. This was a heavy draft upon his time and strength, requiring him to spend most of his time in company or on the road, and leaving but few and scattered opportunities for study or private devotion. But he was a great economist of time, and his solitary rides left him at liberty to commune with his own heart, and God. In this way, and with his morning and evening privilege of reading the Word of God, he prepared his sermons, and nursed the spirituality of heart that made him an able minister of the New Testament. On the Sabbath he was again in Boston, and preached to nearly three thousand persons on the Common. "Blessed be God," he says, speaking of this service, "he made his quickening presence known, and met us in the field." He remained during the week, and preached once in a vacant Baptist Meeting-House, and once in a private house. He also preached in Charlestown. And on the Sabbath, notwithstanding the weather was unfavourable, he preached on the Common to a yet larger congregation than had heretofore attended his ministry. He supposed there were five thousand present. He had now fulfilled the object of this missionary tour, and he prepared to return to his regular field of labour, preaching, as he went, wherever he could find an open door. Soon after reaching his circuit, it was his happiness to begin to gather in the first ripe fruits of the harvest which he had sowed in hope, and for whose

precious increase he had watched and waited with the undoubting trust of a steadfast faith in God. After preaching in several places, he arrived in Middlefield, and united with his colleagues in holding a Quarterly Meeting; and although the Methodists had preached in the place but a few times, yet the word of the gospel had wrought so effectually upon the hearts of some, that when an offer was made to receive members into Society, six persons gave themselves to the fellowship of Methodism, resolved to bear the reproach of Christ, esteeming it greater riches than the treasures of Orthodoxy or the pleasures of sin. This was a season of devout and grateful joy to Mr. Lee; and he rejoiced over it as one that taketh great spoil.

Mr. Lee had now been more than a year preaching the gospel of the Kingdom in New England. He had introduced Methodism into places where previously rumour had scarcely breathed its name; and he had stood its living representation, unblanched by fear or shame, where evil report had scandalized every green thing in its heritage, and given to its virtues the savour of a bad name. With apostolic zeal and devotion he had sowed the good seed of truth, and it was springing up on every hand—a harvest of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. God had given the increase, first the stalk, then the blade, then the full corn in the ear. And although his work was not finished, yet the time had come for him to return to his brethren, and report to them the amount of his labour, and the measure of success graciously vouchsafed by the Lord of the harvest. On leaving for Conference, he makes the following record in acknowledgment of the grace and mercy of God: “Here I may stop and look back on the year that is past. But when I consider the many dangers I have passed through, the many mercies I have received, and the many moments I have not improved, I stand amazed at myself, and astonished at the goodness of God to me. It is now sixteen months and eight days since our last Conference; and in this time, I have travelled several thousand miles, and preached in six states, and in chief part of the large towns in New England. In most places I have met with a kinder reception than I could have expected, among persons holding principles so different from mine; but yet I have been much opposed, and have been under the disagreeable necessity of spend-

ing much of my time on controversial subjects, sometimes in public, and often in private. When opposed, if I discovered an inclination to waive the discourse, they would immediately conclude my principles were so bad I was afraid to let them be known; and if I remained silent, all would go for the truth. For these reasons, I have been led to debate the matter with many of those who have spoken to me with a calm spirit. I have generally had quietness of mind while conversing on doctrinal subjects, and sometimes seemed to be assisted immediately from heaven; and answers have been put in my mouth that were not familiar to me, when strange questions have been asked. I was enabled to go through all my hardships with great satisfaction, and was much blessed in preaching to the people; and the Lord gave me some visible fruit of my labour in the awakening and conversion of precious souls."

We are not without proof of the signal success of Mr. Lee in these efforts to build up the cause of Christ among the decaying Churches of New England. During the sixteen months in which he had been engaged in the work, three circuits had been formed; and he reported to Conference an aggregate of one hundred and eighty white persons, and one coloured, as members of the Church—the fruit which God mercifully permitted him and his colleagues to gather into the storehouse. Under all the circumstances, this was a most gratifying result; and, while it justified the long-cherished impressions of Mr. Lee, as to the ability of Methodism to make and maintain its conquests in any land, however enlightened, and whatever the character or strength of its prejudices, it must have given great encouragement to his co-labourers, and stimulated them even to greater efforts in their sublime purpose of spreading scriptural holiness in the earth. Bishop Asbury seems to have feared for the success of Methodism in New England; and when he learned, in the fall of 1789, that there was an opening for it in that land of formalism and prejudice, he received it as most "encouraging intelligence," and resolved to send another labourer into the field.

## CHAPTER VII.

## FROM THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE OF 1790, TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1792.

Mr. Lee attends Conference in New York—Presents the Claims of New England to Bishop Asbury—Receives Ordination—Increase of the Church—Incipient Plan for Sunday Schools—Death of his Mother—Returns to New England—Boston—Visits Lynn—Success—Returns to Boston—Trials—Out of Money—Difficulties in Boston—Conference again in New York—Bishop Asbury goes to New England—Methodism introduced into Canada—Lynn—Marblehead—Salem—Manchester—New Hampshire—Rhode Island—Lynn—Colleagues, Bonnal and Smith—Extent of his Labours—Reading—Conference in Lynn—A new District—Society in Boston—General Conference in Baltimore—Death of "The Council"—Revision of the Discipline—"Presiding Elder Question"—Defeat of the Plan of electing them—O'Kelly withdraws from the Conference—Provision for his Support—Agitation—Secession—Loss of Members—O'Kelly's Apology—Controversy respecting it—Sneathen's Reply—Mr. Lee involved by O'Kelly—Vindication—Unpublished Reply—Extracts—Failure of O'Kelly—Causes of it.

THE last Conference for the year 1790 was held on the 4th of October, in the city of New York. It was sixteen months since Mr. Lee had parted with his brethren, upon what was truly a missionary experiment of a most arduous and unpromising character; and we may well conceive the conscious satisfaction with which he took his seat in their midst, to dissipate their doubts and to justify and confirm his own confidence, by the report of the success which God had mercifully vouchsafed to his labours. It was the crowning glory of his long-cherished desire to carry a purer system of doctrinal belief, with its concomitant blessing of a sounder experience of the things of God, to those who, notwithstanding the number and variety of their religious privileges, needed to "be taught the way of God more perfectly." But it was a common triumph. Every one rejoiced in his success; and they magnified the grace of God in him, and especially in the fruits of his ministry.

At an early period of the Conference, Mr. Lee sought an inter-

view with Bishop Asbury; and, in a private conversation of three hours' length, he presented the condition and claims of New England, and urged the importance of increasing the number of ministers in that department of the work for the ensuing year. These arguments were happily offered to one whose Christian sympathies always moved in unison with his duties and responsibilities; and, satisfied by the fact of Mr. Lee's success, as well as by his reasoning, he deemed it a suitable occasion for the exercise of the power conferred upon him by the Church, and resolved to enter the door which Providence had so effectually opened for the introduction of Methodism. Accordingly we find, in the Minutes of Conference, four stations and five Preachers set down for the field which, almost singly, Mr. Lee had spent the preceding year in cultivating. Indeed, New England was constituted a District; and the office of Elder was conferred upon the indefatigable evangelist who had, with a zeal so earnest and self-denying, planted the vigorous tree of Methodism in its sterile and stony soil. But the appointment was probably more for counsel in their general work, than for particular oversight upon the present principles and duties of the office. Hence, although his name stands at the head of the District as Elder, it is also placed, in connexion with that of his colleague of the preceding year, D. Smith, on the plan of appointments for Boston.

During this Conference, Mr. Lee consented to enter fully into ministerial orders. Heretofore he had resisted the importunity of his brethren upon the subject. Not feeling the necessity of administering the Sacraments, he was content to preach that men should repent. Regarding the Sacraments as subsidiary in interest and importance to repentance and faith, and as helps to faith, rather than as conveyances of grace, he was desirous of giving chief prominence to the means directly adapted by the constitution of the gospel, to bring sinners "to the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." But his circumstances were now changed; the nature of his labours in forming new Societies, in gathering in the outcasts, in making them "who were no people, the people of God," who would desire for their households the baptism of water, and for themselves the communion of the body and blood of Christ, created a necessity for the authority to perform these functions of

the ministry that his sense of duty, and his anxiety to do all the good in his power, would not allow him to resist. Here, whatever scruples he had formerly cherished, were at an end. A necessity was laid upon him. The way of duty was broad and straight; and he entered it without reluctance or regret. He was accordingly ordained Deacon, in private; and, on the next day, in the presence of "the Congregation of Christ," he was solemnly inducted into the holy order of Elders.

It was a matter of devout rejoicing that the Ecclesiastical year now closing had been marked with spiritual success in every field of Methodism. The Societies had rest, and were at peace; and a great multitude were brought into the fellowship of the saints. A nett increase of 10,930 whites, and 3,439 coloured persons, was at once a subject of thanksgiving, and a proof of the presence and blessing of Him, who said to the Apostles, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

As an interesting feature in the history of the Church, it is deserving of especial notice, that a measure for the establishment of Sunday Schools was introduced and carried through the several Conferences. It was considered under the question:

"What can be done in order to instruct poor children (white and black) to read?"

Ans. "Let us labour as the soul of one man to establish Sunday schools, in or near the place of public worship. Let persons be appointed by the Bishops, Elders, Deacons, or Preachers, to teach (*gratis*) all that will attend and have a capacity to learn; from six o'clock in the morning till ten, and from two o'clock in the afternoon till six; where it does not interfere with public worship. The Council shall compile a proper school-book to teach them learning and piety."

Unhappily for the succeeding generations of Methodists, this wise and pious measure encountered difficulties that ultimately destroyed it. For a time, however, it was popular and efficient. And while its novelty lasted, its claims were properly attended to by all concerned in its promotion. But apathy succeeded to zeal; parents became careless, teachers lukewarm, and children could have no just appreciation of its advantages, and after enduring for awhile, it fell into neglect, and finally, ceased for long years to attract the

notice or interest the heart of the Church. Times of ignorance succeeded; and if no evil was done by the failure, much good was left undone. A brighter day has since dawned.

Before leaving the seat of the Conference, Mr. Lee received a letter from home, communicating the distressing intelligence of the death of his mother. She died on the 14th of September, 1790, closing a life of servitude to Christ in humble hope of a great recompense of reward in the Kingdom of Heaven. Through seventeen years, in which she had been a follower of Christ, she had "rejoiced in God her Saviour," and in a happy consciousness of her "acceptance in the Beloved." And while her departure was a triumph to her, it was nevertheless a source of sorrowing to her family, especially to her two sons, Jesse and John, whom she had given to the Lord for the work of the ministry, and who, in attendance upon their work in New England, were denied the sweet solace of grief in waiting upon her last moments, and mingling their sorrows with those to whose hearts the shock came as the knell of a thousand joys. Deep was the grief of these brothers when, on the eve of their departure from New York for their work in New England, they learned that she, to whom they had ever looked for counsel and comfort, had gone hence, to unite in that grand coronation of Christ which is the daily occupation of the redeemed multitudes in heaven. Their hearts were bowed down within them; they communed with each other in sorrow, and sought consolation in prayer. This sad event was near deranging all their plans for the work of God on which they had entered for the year. It did prevent Mr. John Lee from entering upon his in the New Haven circuit, to which he had been appointed. After consultation, it was deemed prudent for him, especially as his health was delicate, and he might not be able to stand the severe northern winter, to return at once to Virginia; and for the elder to repair to his work in Boston. In pursuance of this plan they parted—the one to build the temple of God among a strange people—the other to shed bitter tears through dreary days in the desolate halls of his forsaken homestead. It is due to the memory of this excellent woman—the mother of two as pure-minded and noble men as ever preached Jesus and his atonement to a sinning world—it is due to her character to say, that she was one of the first persons to enter

into the fellowship of Methodism in Virginia. When there were but one hundred Methodists in the state, she was one of them; and of the first Society formed south of the James River, she, her husband, and two sons, constituted the class. And, from that time until her death, it was her constant delight to minister to the men of God by whose labours she and her family were brought to the realization of the blessedness of believing in Christ. The memory of the just is blessed. And to this hour, her descendants of the third and fourth generation are walking in the same way of life in which she walked with so sincere a faith, and so profound a submission to the will and appointments of God!

On his way to Boston, the field of his labour, Mr. Lee passed through, and preached at several places which he had visited the preceding year. At Middlefield he "baptized one woman and twelve children, and had a solemn time in the Ordinance." At another place he formed a Society. He also administered the holy communion to a small number of believers. These visits were gratifying to his friends, and profitable to his own soul; old trials were recalled to his mind, and were as thorns in his flesh to humble him as a fit preparation for approaching troubles. He gained many laurels, but plucked no roses in the land of the Pilgrims. It was on Saturday, the 13th of November, that, unannounced, unnoticed, and uncared for, he made his solitary entry into the city of Boston; alone and a stranger, on a message from God, to a population as unspiritual as Laodicea, and as boastful, but as dead as Sardis! Without a church or a congregation; or even a friend to whom he might resort for counsel or encouragement! It was a gloomy prospect truly. But the darkness was all external. There was blessed sun-light in his heart. What if these stately churches before which he paused in his walks through the city, were closed to him? What if he could not while away his hours in these splendid mansions of the rich and proud? Would Christ fare better if he were here? Might not He roam these streets as solitary, as unnoticed, and as friendless as His servant? The thought was blissful—and the light that was in him was increased "from glory to glory." The Sabbath came, we know not whether in sunshine or in storm, but it was a singular Sabbath to him. He had nowhere to preach; and in selecting a place of worship for the day, he had to decide



between rigid Calvinism and loose Universalism. It was a predicament into which a Christian would not willingly be often placed. But there was no other doctrine in the place. These were all; and they stood, as they still stand, confronting each other, while truth, in the character of its Arminian representative, occupied a position in the centre with its hand already at the throat of each. And he had to choose between these two evils, or fall back upon one almost as bad, and stay at home. And when it is said he heard a Universalist preach on that strange Sabbath morning, who, in view of the necessity of choosing between the two creeds as they stood in those days of antagonism, especially upon the great doctrine of redemption—who shall say he did wrong? Now, when the lines of moral corruption are more distinctly drawn, and these doctrinal systems have been more certainly developed in their practical results, it might be regarded as a desecration. But then, in connexion with its circumstances, it might have allowed of an ample justification; and, detached from them, it might have been wrong to condemn it. At least the charity that thinketh no evil will find no evil in the act. At night, in a private house, and to a small company, he had the privilege of preaching the true doctrine of the gospel himself. Thus passed his first Sabbath in Boston.

The ensuing week was spent in a profitless effort to secure a place in which to preach. In this labour he "met with great and heavy trials." Every one seemed resolved to frustrate the attempt; no one encouraged him, and he was almost without even the sympathy of common civility. On his former visit he made a few friends, but these deserted him now. "One of the greatest friends I had in the town when I was here before," he says, "did not come to see me now; and when I went to see him, would scarcely take any notice of me." But this was only a portion of the cup he had to drink. A few essayed to help him, but they were soon discouraged, and gave up in despair. But difficulties could not damp the ardour of the apostle of Methodism in New England. Daily he renewed his efforts, and daily defeat only strengthened his determination and multiplied his endeavours. And still, as darker grew his prospects, the stronger was his trust in God, and the more was he confirmed in the conviction that God, who sent him to Boston, would make his ministry a blessing to its inhabitants. Another

Sabbath came, and others were added to that, and weeks ran into months, and found him in the midst of increasing difficulties, with a quenchless desire to establish Methodism in Boston. Repulsed, insulted, without sympathy, and destitute of friends, he toiled on, and, as opportunity served, in private houses, sowed the good seed of the kingdom, and patiently waited for the increase that cometh from God. On one occasion, when partial success had crowned his toils, hope folded her wings and laid down to repose in the quiet of his grateful heart. And when, contrary to his expectations, he received a positive, perhaps a disdainful rejection, she started from her rest and spread her wings "to fly away as an eagle towards heaven." But he chained her to his heart, and struck out another pathway to success.

In the midst of these almost hopeless attempts, he received a letter from a gentleman in Lynn, inviting him to visit the place, and encouraging him to believe he might find a place for preaching, and some, at least, who were willing to hear what he had to say of the way of life. This gentleman, Benjamin Johnson, had, perhaps in Maryland, some twenty years previously, attended the ministry of Methodism; and he was anxious to renew the religious opportunities he had then enjoyed. There were others in the town who, in their visits to, or during a residence in the South, had possessed the same privilege: and these also were anxious to have a Society of Methodists established in the place. Perhaps the set time to favour Boston had not yet come, and Providence may have intended to reach that seat of formalism by the gradual establishment of His cause in its outposts—the towns and villages in its vicinity. Whether Mr. Lee reasoned in this way or not, it is at least certain he went into the towns and villages preaching the kingdom of God, and that he met with most encouraging success. Some days after the letter from Lynn, and at the expiration of a month of constant anxiety and fruitless toil in seeking a house to preach in, he determined to accept the invitation, and left Boston. It was after dark, on the 13th of December, 1790, when he arrived in Lynn. His welcome in the family of Mr. Johnson was as a cordial to his spirits, and made him feel as though he was at home, a rare thing in New England. Nor was his welcome confined to this family. Others received him with a cheerful heart, and re-

garded his visit as a merciful interposition of Providence for the salvation of their souls. On the night after his arrival, in the house of his host, and to a good many hearers, he opened his message in a sermon upon John iii. 17: *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world, through him, might be saved.* He "bore a public testimony against unconditional election and reprobation; and maintained that Christ died for all men, without respect of persons." A deep seriousness pervaded the congregation; and some of them seemed to feel the power of the word of God. This was grateful to the feelings of Mr. Lee, and he blessed God for the consolation. The next Monday night, about a mile from Lynn, at the residence of Mr. Lye, he preached again to a decent well-behaved company, on Gal. vi. 7. In warning them against self-deception, he "felt great enlargement of heart, and much of the Divine presence." Of this assembly he says: "I have not met with a company of people for a long time that had so much the appearance of a Methodist congregation as this." On Wednesday, the 22d, after spending more than a week in Lynn, he returned to Boston. Previous to his departure, however, he had the pleasure of knowing that his visit and ministry had not been in vain in the Lord. He was earnestly entreated to come again; and was assured that some of the people "talked strongly of forming a Methodist Society." And this resolution was not the mere "talk of the lips" that "tendeth to poverty." It was the purpose of those whose hearts had been opened by the Word of God, and whose understandings had been enlightened by the preaching of the pure doctrines of the gospel. And the time for the fulfilment of this purpose soon came. After several visits to the place, he had the happiness of gathering in the first ripe fruits of his ministry in Massachusetts. On the 20th of February, 1791, he formed a Society in Lynn, consisting of eight members, which on that day week was increased by the addition of twenty-one more; and in two months thereafter, on the 9th of May, "upwards of seventy men who paid a tax, according to law," to support the Congregational minister, came together and took certificates of their adhesion to Methodism, and thenceforth contributed to the support of a ministry more congenial with their religious tastes. The accession of these men, with their families,

and their influence, greatly strengthened the infant Society ; and led, it is very probable, to the determination, which was soon after carried into effect, of building a house of worship. This house, if we may judge from the circumstances of its erection, must have been of very humble pretensions. In Mr. Lee's account of the matter, it was begun on the 14th, and dedicated on the 26th of June, 1791. But it has the reputation of being the first Methodist house of worship ever erected in the state ; and no doubt, when its history shall be written, it will be said of many a precious soul, " this man and that woman were born there." There seems never to have been any difficulty in the plantation and growth of Methodism in Lynn. It took root at once in the soil of the heart, grew rapidly, and yet remains a praise and a blessing to multitudes.

On returning to Boston, after the first visit to Lynn, Mr. Lee found his condition in every respect more difficult than when he departed from it. The few friends he had left behind him, had failed in every effort to obtain a house for worship, and were resting in the inactivity of despair. His former landlord refused any longer to entertain him ; he had to look for new lodgings ; and, after settling for his board, he found his whole stock in cash to consist of two shillings and a penny ! For some days previously, he had felt considerable anxiety respecting the state of his purse. He apprehended a deficiency in settling with his landlord ; and he was very unwilling to let it be known to how low a state his finances were reduced, lest some one should suspect him to be seeking filthy lucre ; a suspicion that, however unjust, would have scorched his soul with a secret agony. But he was happily relieved, and by what may be regarded as a providential deliverance, from all danger of such an imputation. He trusted in God to provide not only for support, but for his reputation ; and he was led in a way he knew not. While in Lynn, and while reflecting upon his monetary difficulties, a gentleman became smitten with anxiety to purchase a copy of the Arminian Magazine, belonging to Mr. Lee, and which he was engaged in reading. He very willingly parted with his book and his fears at the same time, and thereby escaped both embarrassment and exposure. For, after paying his board, he was enabled to write in his Diary, with the calmness of a Christian

philosopher, "If I can always have two shillings by me, beside paying all I owe, I think I shall be satisfied."

For several months after these ineffectual efforts to establish regular preaching in Boston, he visited and preached in the towns and villages adjacent to the city.\* But he scarcely entered a place without having to run the gauntlet with the minister of the parish, or a knot of selectmen, who, having custody of the town-house, felt themselves the guardians of the morals and manners of the place. These were always differing with each other as to the peculiar line of duty, under an application to occupy the house for religious worship. Some were willing, some doubted, others were positively opposed; and, sometimes, while they were debating, and hesitating, or seeking a plausible pretext for refusing, some one would offer his house to the evangelist; and he would preach and be away on his mission, before the committee had decided whether he should preach in the place or not. In Salem he had frequently occupied, with the consent of its pastor, the Church of the Rev. Mr. Hopkins; but on visiting it in April, Mr. H. told him "some of the people were uneasy about his preaching, and thought it would not do to encourage him, by letting him preach in their house." And so he was adrift again, at the mercy of the selectmen, or, more Christianly, under the guidance of the Providence that made all these things work together for good to the soul of His servant, and the increase of the number of them that believe. In Lynn, the day after his adventure with Mr. Hopkins, he was admitted into the Meeting-House for the first time; and, coupling the two facts together, he says: "Yesterday I was denied the use of a pulpit in which I had frequently preached, and to-day I have obtained liberty to preach in one which I never occupied before. So it is, I pass through good and evil report. I have prosperity enough to keep my spirits from sinking, and adversity sufficient to keep me from being exalted above measure." Even in Boston, he was gaining some ground. In a private house, he had more hearers than commonly attended his appointments; they were more

\* Lynn, Marblehead, Danvers, Manchester, Beverly, Cape Ann Harbour, Ipswich, Hamlet, and Salem, are mentioned as places in which he preached with customary opposition, perseverance, and success. It will be impossible to enter into details.

attentive to the word, and some of them seemed cut to the heart; they expressed a greater regard, and appeared more friendly than usual to the itinerant evangelist. He "felt much inward peace, and an increase of faith." Hope lifted itself in his heart, and pointed out a future radiant with triumph and replete with consolation.

One of the last official acts of Mr. Lee, previous to his departure for Conference, which was near at hand, was to furnish such of the citizens of Lynn, as regularly attended his ministry, with certificates of the fact, and also of their contributing to his support, in order that they might escape the tax imposed by the state, for the support of a ministry that they no longer desired to hear. Some of these had entered into Society with the Methodists, and all of them had been brought as far under its influence as the certificates attested. But the Society itself was still united, prosperous, and happy. In less than two months from its organization it numbered fifty-eight members, and was gradually ascending in the scale of moral improvement, social influence, and religious experience—the power of faith and the life of purity and love.

The Conference to which Mr. Lee was now attached was held in the city of New York, on the 26th of May, 1791. Of this meeting, Bishop Asbury says: "Our ordinary business was enlivened by the relation of experiences, and by profitable observations on the work of God. About thirty Preachers were present, and not a frown, a sign of sour temper, or an unkind word was seen or heard among us." It was an assembly of Christian men, one of whose rules required them to cherish a continual sense of the presence of God. At this Conference Mr. Lee was continued as Elder, although his district was somewhat changed, and considerably enlarged. Boston was omitted in the Minutes, and Lynn substituted as the name of the circuit, which nevertheless included the city, which hitherto had foiled all the efforts of one of the most indomitable of that sturdy and tireless race of Methodist Preachers. The district included all of New England in which the Methodists had organized Societies, and extended to Kingston in Upper Canada; it had seven appointments, and twelve ministers, exclusive of the Elder, who, while he exercised a general oversight, seems nevertheless to have confined his labours to the circuit of the preceding year. Yet

he devoted some considerable portion of his time in visiting and preaching in places previously unknown to Methodism. From the Conference Bishop Asbury made a rapid tour through Mr. Lee's district, preaching with his usual frequency, zeal, and popularity. In this journey he was accompanied, for the most part, by the Elder, under whose guidance he travelled a smoother pathway than had blessed the first visits of the pioneer of Methodism in the land. And it is at least probable he remembered the importunity of the stripling who, in 1784, so earnestly desired to carry the sublime hopes of a living faith to the cold hearts and lukewarm spirits of the descendants of the strong-minded Pilgrims. But he was now in the presence of his conquests; and saw on every hand the proofs of his zeal, the trophies of his labour of love. Much, however, remained to be done before righteousness filled the land. Of a public religious service in Stratford, the Bishop gives an account as unique, as the conduct of the people was singular and surprising. "We came to Stratford—good news—they have voted that the town-house shall be shut: well, where shall we preach? Some of the selectmen, one at least, granted access:—we had close work on Isaiah lv. 6, 7. Some smiled, some laughed, some swore, some talked, some prayed, some wept—had it been a house of our own, I should not have been surprised had the windows been broken." It is as difficult to imagine how, under such circumstances, the Bishop maintained his gravity, as it would be to conceive what the rest were doing when so many were so variously acting in contrast with each other. Breaking the windows would only have been an additional element to a scene sufficiently Babel-like without it. At New Haven, he says, "I had President S., Dr. W., and the Rev. Mr. E., to hear me, and several of the collegians, with a few scattering citizens. When I had done no man spoke to me. I thought of dear Mr. Whitefield's words to Mr. Boardman and Mr. Pillmore, at their first coming over to America:—'Ah!' said he, 'if ye were Calvinists ye would take the country before ye.' The divines were grave, and the students attentive; they used me like a fellow-Christian in coming to hear me preach, and like a stranger in other respects: should Cokesbury or Baltimore ever furnish the opportunity, I, in my turn, will requite their behaviour, by treating them as friends, brethren, and gentlemen. The difficulty I met with in New Haven

for lodging, and for a place to hold meeting, made me feel and know the worth of Methodists more than ever." The Bishop was learning to prize the fortitude and self-denial of the Apostle of Methodism in the inhospitable country through which he also, as a stranger and a pilgrim, was striving to build the kingdom of God. In closing this journey into New England, which had occupied nearly two months, he remarked, with characteristic simplicity and disinterestedness: "Well, it is all for God, and Christ, and souls: I neither covet nor receive any man's silver or gold—food, raiment, and a little rest, is all I want."

It was during this year, and under the Eldership of Mr. Lee, that Methodism was introduced into Canada. At the Conference in New York, the Kingston circuit was formed, and placed under the supervision of the Elder of the New England district. The Rev. William Losee was appointed to the arduous work of introducing Methodism in that portion of British America. After numerous privations and hardships in the wilderness of Western New York, he entered Canada at Kingston, and commenced the formation of a circuit in its vicinity, along the banks of Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte. He met occasionally with persons who had heard the Methodist Preachers in England or in the United States. These gave him a cordial welcome, and with their co-operation he succeeded in forming a circuit and in organizing a few Societies. The next year this field of labour was divided; two circuits were entered on the Minutes, and stood, Oswegatchie, W. Losee, Cataraqui, Darius Dunham; and at the same time, which must be regarded as the product of Mr. Losee's labours, although Dr. Bangs\* attributes it jointly to the two, one hundred and sixty-five are reported as the number in Society in Canada. And this in 1793 was increased to three hundred and forty-five. From the beginning, Methodism prospered in the province, and it is still fruitful and flourishing—a messenger of joy and consolation to the hearts and homesteads of thousands. We have no evidence that Mr. Lee participated in this work by any personal exercise of his ministry. But as Elder, he no doubt encouraged it; and there was the sanction of his own brilliant example, and his still increasing

\* Hist. M. E. Church, vol. i. p. 322.



success, to stimulate just such efforts among men whose quenchless zeal to save souls would have made them "mighty men, men of renown," in any age of Christian heroism.

Mr. Lee resumed his labours after Conference with a zeal as unabated as the love that prompted it; and with an industry as persevering, to say the least of it, as the opposition that everywhere confronted his efforts to do good.

Arrived in Lynn, he catechized the children, led the classes, preached, and visited from house to house, not merely as a friend, but as a Christian pastor that loves his God, and is—

"Mainly anxious  
That the flock he serves may love Him too."

After preaching here twice on Sunday, the 31st of July, he rode to Marblehead, and at six o'clock in the evening, preached from Luke xvi. 31. The service was encouraging, the reason, at least, in his own words, will show what he thought encouraging: "There is a considerable stir in this town, respecting the sentiments of the Methodists, and a great many wish us to depart out of their coasts; but the more the lion roars, the more I am encouraged. I found a few that were almost persuaded to be Methodists, as well as Christians."

"Wednesday, August 3, I went to Salem, and at night preached on Prov. xxviii. 13. I felt a good deal of life and liberty, and spoke pretty closely to my hearers. I had some Hopkinsians to hear me; but they do not like my way of preaching, because I advise sinners to pray that their sins may be forgiven, and they think no one ought to pray till their sins are forgiven.

"Wednesday, 10th, I rode to Manchester, and at five o'clock preached from 1 Sam. ii. 30. After I had gone through my text, I spoke half an hour on the possibility of falling from grace. I spoke freely, and endeavoured to bring forward every argument I could to establish the point. Many of the people seemed to stare very much. After I had done, the people came out, and collected together to talk about the sermon. Some said my arguments could not be answered, or that the Scripture was on my side; but others complained heavily. I committed the cause to the Lord, and could not doubt but that good was done.

"Friday, 12th. I rode to Appleton, in the old parish of Ipswich. When I got there, the woman of the house met me at the door, and began to weep, and said she had found the Lord precious to her soul; that she was deeply affected by my preaching when I was round two weeks before; and when she heard me the last evening, she was so distressed she could not rest, and returned home, crying to the Lord to have mercy upon her, till about two o'clock in the morning, at which time the Lord set her soul at liberty. She was well satisfied that her sins were forgiven. She then added, 'Let others say what they will against you, I bless the Lord that I ever heard your voice.'

"Friday, 26th. Rode to Greenland, New Hampshire, and dined with Dr. March; then to Portsmouth, and put up at Mr. Walton's, a Separate minister. We had meeting in a private house. At Mr. Walton's request, I preached on Psal. i. 6. I found it to be a time of much life and love, and some of the people appeared to be much affected. When service was ended, some of the people blessed God for our meeting; and when the minister asked some of them what they thought of shutting such preaching out of the Meeting-House, some of them said, if they shut that man out, they did not know who they would let in. All seemed very friendly.

"September. Friday, 23d. Preached in Windham, at the house of Josiah Sweet, on Phil. i. 22. This is the first time a Methodist ever preached in this town. I had a good congregation, and some of them were much affected by the word. I think the time is near when the work of the Lord will begin to revive in this part of the world; and if the Lord work by us, our good mistaken brethren will be brought to say, 'Send, Lord, by whom thou wilt send.'

"November. Monday, 7th. Providence, Rhode Island. I was kindly received by my old friends, and lodged at Mr. Jacob's. Tuesday night, preached on 1 John v. 21. Part of the time in which I was speaking, I found freedom; but the rest of the time I felt but little comfort. Wednesday, rode to Cranston, about ten miles from Providence, and was kindly received in the house of General Lippett." On Friday night, in the house of his host, he preached on 2 Cor. v. 17. "I felt more than usual comfort in speaking. My heart was drawn out in love and pity towards my

hearers. In this place the people know but little of the life and power of religion, and it is very seldom that they can get to any place of public worship. Seeing how destitute they are of the preaching of the gospel, I was brought again to pray earnestly that the Lord would send forth more labourers into His vineyard."

On returning to Lynn, from a tour among the circuits of his district, in January 1792, Mr. Lee had the happiness to find Mr. Robert Bonsall, "who had just come from New York to preach the gospel," in connexion with Mr. Smith and himself, in the regions about Boston. This was an occasion of great joy to him. And, after attending to some preliminary measures, he commenced a visitation of that part of his district lying in Connecticut. Passing through Boston and Needham; he visited, perhaps for the first time, Sterling and Wilbraham, where he "found the hearts of the people open to receive him." At Enfield, Connecticut, "religion had prospered, and a good class had been formed." He also visited East Windsor, Reading, Dantown, Middlesex, Wilton, Stratford, Hartford, Tolland, and Ellington, and many other places. In most of them great changes had been wrought, and he rejoiced that the Lord had prospered his work among the Methodists, since he last visited that part of the vineyard. In this trip he travelled more than five hundred miles, and in thirty-three days preached forty sermons. On reviewing it he writes, "When I look back on my late journey, I am constrained to acknowledge that the Lord has been with me. I have reason to hope that He has given me fresh strength and courage to go forward in His ways."

The labour of the Conference year from May 1791 to August 1792, is thus summed up: He had preached three hundred and twenty-one sermons, and delivered twenty-four public exhortations. He had travelled some portion of nearly every day, led classes, catechized the children—in one place there were nearly forty of them in a class—and visited and prayed with the people in their families; and besides this he had read, in addition to the Bible, more than five thousand pages. And he also found time to keep a Diary of his labours and his experience of the things of God. It may gratify the curious, and will at least serve to show his taste in the selection of books, as well as his industry in reading them, to annex a catalogue of the works he read, with the number

of pages they contained. They are as follows: *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, pp. 399; *Fletcher's Works*, vols. i. and ii., pp. 330 and 320; *Preacher's Experience*, pp. 370; *Barclay's Apology for the Quakers*, pp. 574; *Sellon's Answer to Coles*, pp. 347; *Wesley's Funeral Sermon*, by Whitehead, pp. 69; *The Christian Pattern*, pp. 308; *Mrs. Rowe's Devout Exercises*, pp. 214; *A View of Religion*, by Hannah Adams, pp. 410; *Garrettson's Experience*, pp. 252; *Sweeting's Narrative*, pp. 64; *Marks of a Work of God*, Edwards, pp. 45; *Hammet's Appeal*, pp. 24; *Wesley's Notes*, vols. i. ii. and iii., pp. 416, 349, and 342; *Aristotle's Works*, pp. 568; *Tappan's Election Sermon*, pp. 36; making a total of 5434. And when to all this it is added, he heard seventy-four sermons preached by other ministers, we have a result as creditable to his diligence, as it is worthy of imitation by all who desire to "make full proof of their ministry."

The Conference for the extreme northern portion of the Church was held in Lynn, on the 1st of August, 1792.\* Besides Bishop Asbury, there were eight ministers present, and in their business, as in their feelings, they were of one mind. The session, according to Bishop Asbury, commenced on Thursday and closed by the religious services of the Sabbath. There was preaching every night. In the evening of the Sabbath a love-feast was held. "But to do good, forget not." The early Methodists seem never to have forgotten this apostolic precept.

At this Conference a new circuit was formed in Rhode Island, and called Providence; and this, with Lynn, Boston, and Needham, constituted the district of which Mr. Lee had the supervision. The appointments previously under Mr. Lee's oversight were attached to a new district at the Conference preceding that of Lynn, and his first colleague in New England, Jacob Brush, was appointed Elder. The Apostle of Methodism in New England was pushing his conquests into "the regions beyond." Lynn, although under the pastoral care of Mr. Rainor, seems to have been the head-quarters of the district. The Elder, the father of Methodism in the place, was very fond of his children, made it the starting-point of his journeys, and the place of his rest when his work was done. Very

\* This is the date of the Minutes. Bishop Asbury says it commenced on the 3d of August.

soon after the adjournment of Conference, he entered upon a tour of exploration into Rhode Island, for the purpose, it would seem, of finding preaching-places for the lately formed, perhaps more correctly *named*, circuit. He visited and preached in the principal towns, and if he had no Societies, it is presumable he found places where under the blessing of God they were subsequently formed. Warren was one of these places, and in the Minutes for 1793, we find Providence substituted by Warren as the name of the circuit, and fifty-eight Church members reported as the fruit of God's blessing upon the labour of His servants. Like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, Mr. Lee was fond of carrying the message of Christ into strange places—he cared not to enter into “other men's labours.” It was a pious ambition to break the first bush,\* and cultivate new fields—to be the pioneer of his brethren. And in his department of Methodism he suffered no one to take his crown from him. Returning from Rhode Island, he writes: “When I consider the goodness of God to me in this journey, I am constrained to call upon my soul to bless His holy name. I know I have found delight in the service of God, and comfort among the people. I have had an opportunity of preaching to many who never heard a Methodist before. I have generally found satisfaction in labouring among such people as know but little about us.”

A Society had at length, and after almost incredible efforts, been formed in Boston. This event, so happy to Mr. Lee, occurred on the 13th of July, 1792, a few weeks previous to the Conference. At first only “a few joined.” But “they soon began to increase in numbers;” and felt the need, as they greatly desired it, of a house of worship they could call their own. On the 29th of August, Mr. Lee says: “Brother J. Corsden,” the Preacher, “came to Lynn for me to go to Boston, to view a piece of ground that he was inclined to purchase to set a Meeting-House on. I went, but did not approve of the spot.” They continued after this to worship in a hired house, and did not succeed in building a Church until the summer of 1795.

\* It was customary with the early Methodist Preachers, in their travels through the country, to *break a bush* at a fork of the road, or where they left it, to indicate their course to those who came after them. The side of the road on which the broken bush was found, pointed out the path to be followed.

On the first of October, Mr. Lee left Lynn for Baltimore, the seat of the General Conference. Before leaving he preached a sermon full of interest to him and his hearers; both with regard to the subject itself, and the occasion on which it was delivered. He expected to extend his visit to his relations in Virginia, and would be absent from his flock for several months. They, in the mean time, bereft of his pious attention, and exposed to trials and persecutions, would need the solace and support of a constant reference to first principles, and a constant dependence mutually upon each other, and collectively upon God. To minister to their steadfastness in the truth of the gospel, and their Christian diligence in the hope of their calling, he preached a faithful sermon from these most appropriate words: "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come to see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, and that ye stand fast in one spirit with one mind." Phil. i. 27. It was a season of deep and sanctified emotion, of mutual sorrow and grateful joy, in which heart mingled with heart, hope answered to hope, and faith working by love sung songs in the house of its pilgrimage and shouted victory and glory to God.

The General Conference assembled in Baltimore on the 1st of November, 1792. This was the first meeting of the kind since the Christmas Conference of 1784, at which the Church was organized. There was a general expectation among the Preachers that, owing to the great extent of the work, and the difficulty of coming from its remote points to a central meeting, this would be the last assemblage of the kind. It was probably owing to the prevalence of this opinion, that the attendance was so general from all parts of the Connection.\* It was also expected, and greatly desired by many, that some better and more acceptable measure for the general government of the Church, than the present composition of the Conference, or the unpopular and lately abandoned *Council*, would be adopted for the future and more harmonious legislation of Methodism. An attempt had been made to obviate these difficulties. But upon trial it was found impracticable, and, in the judgment of Mr. Lee and others, dangerous to the unity and independ-

\* We can find no mention of the *number* present at this Conference, though all agree that the attendance was very large.

ence of the Church. This was the Council just referred to. In 1789, the Bishops introduced the plan of a chosen body of men from the several districts, as representatives of the whole Connection, to meet at stated times for the purpose of forming rules and regulations for the government of the Church in all its departments. The presentation of the plan created considerable opposition, but after a somewhat protracted debate, in the various Conferences, it was found to have a majority in its favour. After its adoption, the mode of its composition, its powers, and the regulations by which it was to be governed, were defined and settled. It was to consist of "the Bishops and the Presiding Elders, provided the members who compose the Council be never fewer than nine." When assembled they were to "have authority to mature everything they might judge expedient. 1. To preserve the general union. 2. To render and preserve the external form of worship similar in all the Societies through the continent. 3. To preserve the essentials of the Methodist doctrines and discipline pure and uncorrupted. And, lastly, they were authorized to mature everything they might see necessary for the good of the Church, and for the promoting and improving the colleges and plan of education." These were large powers. But they were neutralized by a subsequent provision, which, apart from the intrinsic defectiveness of the plan, foredoomed the measure to a certain and not distant death. It was enacted, perhaps "with malice aforethought," "that nothing shall be received as the resolution of the Council, unless it be assented to unanimously by the Council; and nothing so assented to by the Council, shall be binding in any district, till it has been agreed upon by a majority of the Conference which is held for that district." There are strange contrasts in human actions. Measures intended to preserve life are sometimes found to contain the elements of decay and dissolution. It was so in the case of this plan for the conservation of the unity and preservation of Methodism, and the spirituality of its forms of worship. The legislation that granted power to the Council to preserve the essentials of discipline pure and uncorrupted in all the Societies, provided also for the defeat of any, or all of its measures, in any district, by a single vote; and left the dissenting district to the uncensurable disregard of both the authority and laws of the Council. So far then was this plan from strength-

ening the bonds of union and uniformity among the Societies, that it promoted discord and legalized non-conformity. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Council met only twice, in 1789 and 1790, and then perished amidst general dissatisfaction, and without even the regrets of its first and warmest friends. From its inception Mr. Lee was opposed to it. And at its first meeting, although not a member of it, he addressed a letter to the Council, in which he pointed out to the consideration of its members, the errors of the plan, and the evils it would produce in the Church. But he received small thanks for his manly independence in thus opposing it. He received a letter in reply, in which he was informed that the Council was one of the fundamentals of Methodism, and if he chose quietly to submit to the regulations of the discipline they were willing to retain him as a brother and fellow-labourer. But leaving him to infer that if he did not, he might get out of the Church with whatever measure of precipitation he might choose to exercise upon the occasion. This was rather cool treatment. But it had no other effect than to confirm his opposition to the plan, not to its members, and to strengthen his purpose to seek its destruction by all the ardour with which he believed it to be, not a fundamental, as the Council chose to call it, but an evil excrescence upon the pure body of Methodism. Mr. Lee, at that early day, held that a representative General Conference was the only true and proper principle for the composition of the legislative department of the Church. The Council, though claiming to be representative, was not so, either in form or in fact. It was composed of the Bishops and Presiding Elders, and these Elders were appointed and removed by the Bishops exclusively, and at their pleasure. And he was always for guarding power by wise balances and judicious checks. A delegation from each Conference, elected by its members, was the plan he desired to see adopted; and notwithstanding the unceremonious rejection of his letter and himself, by the Council of 1789, he maintained his position and his principles; and in July 1791, submitted a plan for a delegated General Conference in 1792 to Bishop Asbury. In a subsequent portion of this work we shall find him assisting in the completion of these views as a member of the committee that drafted the restrictive articles, commonly called the Constitution, and gave to the Church, in 1812, its first delegated



General Conference. There may have been an earlier advocate of such a measure, but we have not discovered it.

The Council had not assembled since December 1790; and, on their adjournment then, they appointed their next meeting to be held at Cokesbury or Baltimore, in December 1792. The period of its meeting had arrived; but the Council was as devoid of authority as it was dead in the affections of the Church. Whatever may have been the opinions of those composing it, as to the utility and efficiency of the plan, it is very certain, if the opinions of the great majority of the Preachers and people are to be taken as an indication, that it had become exceedingly disagreeable. And it is a significant fact that, although it was expected that some of the Preachers would try to revive it in the General Conference, it was not even so much as mentioned with pleasure or approbation. "All showed a disposition to drop the Council, and all things belonging thereto." Indeed, "the Bishop requested that the *name* of the Council might not be mentioned in the Conference." It was dead—Mr. Lee was present at its burial—and, it is probable, remembered the captious manner with which *the* Council of 1789 had charged him with "making so many objections to the fundamentals of Methodism." His triumph had come; and it was complete. He enjoyed it in silence.

The first and principal business of this Conference was the revision of the Discipline of the Church. This was thoroughly done, both with respect to the subject-matter of the Discipline as a manual of Christian duty, and as to the form and arrangement of the book itself. But the revision did not affect the fundamental laws or doctrines of the Church. The latter were explained and defended in a series of tracts incorporated in the book. The former were modified and strengthened according as, in practical operation, they had been found either defective or imperfect. In a prefatory address "to the Members of the Methodist Societies in the United States," written by the Bishops, they say: "We have made some little alterations in the present edition, yet such as affect not in any degree the essentials of our doctrines and discipline. We think ourselves obliged frequently to view and review the whole order of our Church, always aiming at perfection, standing on the shoulders of those who have lived before us, and taking the advantage of our

former selves." It was this principle that guided them in modifying, strengthening, altering, or obliterating the rules and prudential regulations of the Church. They were the chief pastors of a spiritual people, anxious to have a pure and faultless Church; and, possessed of full power in the premises, and "aiming at perfection," they remodelled their rules of moral regimen, enlarged and settled their penal code, and multiplied the ligaments that held the Societies in fellowship with each other, and bound the Church with cords of love to the Cause of the Crucified. For a full and detailed account of the proceedings of the Conference, in this revision of the Discipline, the reader is referred to Mr. Lee's History of the Methodists, or to Bangs's History of the M. E. Church, vol. i. pp. 342-351; whence they are borrowed, without credit or confession of obligation. With respect to the doctrines of Methodism, so far as they formed a subject of consideration, the Bishops, in the address already referred to, say: "We wish to see this little publication in the house of every Methodist; and the more so, as it contains our plan of collegiate and Christian education, and the articles of religion maintained more or less, in part or in whole, by every Reformed Church in the world. We would likewise declare our real sentiments on the Scripture doctrine of election and reprobation; on the infallible, unconditional perseverance of all that ever have believed or ever shall; on the doctrine of Christian perfection; and, lastly, on the nature and subjects of Christian baptism." And upon each of these doctrines, they did "declare their real sentiments," in language so plain, convincing, and unanswerable, that they stand up to this day as proofs of their soundness in the faith, and of their ripeness in Scripture doctrine. Their descendants and successors, drinking at this fountain of health, have filled the country with the knowledge of these truths. In that hour, "the doctrines of grace," as they are strangely miscalled, of particular redemption, eternal election, eternal reprobation, infallible perseverance, and indwelling sin, received a shock, under which they are still staggering to their final fall.

During this general revision of the Discipline, an amendment was introduced designed to effect a change in one of the fundamental regulations of the Church; and which, if successful, would, it is probable, have interrupted the progress, and altered the fortunes of

Methodism in America. The amendment involved nothing less than the annihilation of the itinerant system, by the destruction of the Episcopal power in making the appointments. It proposed to give each minister the right to appeal from the Bishop to the Conference, and to the Conference the authority to veto the appointment of the Bishop. This may not have been the design of its author, but it might have been predicted as its inevitable result. The amendment was introduced by the Rev. James O'Kelly, and was in the following words :

"After the Bishop appoints the Preachers at Conference to their several circuits, if any one think himself injured by the appointment, he shall have liberty to appeal to the Conference and state his objections, and if the Conference approve his objections, the Bishop shall appoint him to another circuit."

Considering the mode of making these appointments as the only feasible one for the maintenance of an itinerant system of preaching the gospel, a more mischievous resolution can scarcely be conceived of; and it is not surprising that it filled the Conference with strife and debate. At its opening a large majority seemed to approve of the measure. It called forth the strongest minds of the Conference, and the debate was continued three days. As the question necessarily involved the administration of Bishop Asbury, he at an early stage of the debate very prudently retired from the Conference, leaving Dr. Coke to preside until the question should be settled. At length, by one of those strokes of policy by which mischief is exposed and prevented, and the integrity of a great principle is preserved from injury, Mr. Dickens, one of the fathers of the Church, moved a division of the subject; thus, 1st. Shall the Bishop appoint the Preachers to the circuits? 2d. Shall a Preacher be allowed an appeal? The first question was carried without a dissenting voice. And the fate of the other soon followed—it was rejected by a large majority. It had been happy if all had acquiesced in this decision. But, unfortunately, the author of the resolution, and a few of his friends, had identified their feelings with the subject, and their confidence in the Church perished with the loss of their favourite measure. The next day, on the opening of Conference, a letter was received from Mr. O'Kelly and his partisans, in which, because of the loss of their resolution, they

declined any longer occupation of their seats as members. And every effort, by the appointment of a committee to confer with them, and a personal interview between Mr. O'Kelly and Dr. Coke, failed to pacify their feelings or change their determinations. They were fixed in their purpose—and it extended further and comprehended more than was conceived of by the Conference. A few days after the issue of this matter in the Conference, Mr. O'Kelly and his adherents left the city, and returned to Virginia, in one district of which the leader of this matter had been labouring for ten years preceding his rupture with the Conference, and where, if he had succeeded with his amendment, he might have remained ten years longer, or during life. The fact here mentioned will show *he* had no just occasion for a quarrel with the appointing power of the Church. Witnessing the abrupt departure of Mr. O'Kelly, Mr. Lee predicted "he would not be quiet long; that he would try to be head of some party." A prediction that we shall soon see was fully verified.

Although the withdrawal of Mr. O'Kelly and his party from the Conference was not a secession from the Church, yet it soon assumed that character. The Conference adjourned on the 14th of November; and Bishop Asbury opened the Conference for the Virginia district on the 26th of the same month, in Manchester. During this Conference two of the disaffected party, W. McKendree and R. Haggard, sent him "their resignations in writing." These were probably accepted, but the Conference agreed to let their displeased brethren still preach among them. Bishop Asbury introduced the case of Mr. O'Kelly, and it was resolved, in consideration of his age and services, to allow him his annual salary of 40*l.*, "as when he travelled in the Connexion, provided he was peaceable, and forebore to excite divisions among the brethren."<sup>\*</sup> To this proposition Mr. O'Kelly acceded, and during a part of the year he received his salary. But the spirit of dissension was in him; and he subsequently withdrew from the Church, and undertook the erection "of a new and pure Church." In this work his success was less than his anticipations. Still, if he had meditated mischief, he accomplished enough to gratify the taste of any one

<sup>\*</sup> Journal, vol. ii. p. 148. See also Snethen's Reply to O'Kelly's Apology, page 36.

whose lust of evil is not set on fire of hell. It was as a traveller in the path of his ravages that Bishop Asbury, with his characteristic plainness of speech, says, "I was closely employed in reading 'The Curse of Divisions.'" And a curse it was to one of the fairest portions of Methodism,—arresting its progress, blighting its fruits, and drying up the green things of its heritage with the drought of summer. During its prevalence revivals ceased, the love of many waxed cold, brother strove with brother, the Churches were filled with strife, and the pulpits rung with controversy, debate, and contention. Under these circumstances of discord it is not surprising to witness a great falling away from the Church. In the years of its greatest influence, 1793-4-5, there was a clear loss in the membership of the Church of 7352. But, although this loss was so great, there is no sufficient reason to believe "The Republican Methodists," as they were then called, had met with corresponding success. It has been the aim of some writers to show that there were numerous accessions to Methodism during this period, and that the loss of the Church was so much greater in proportion to the amount of these accessions. And therefore the gain of O'Kelly was proportionally great. But this argument is unsupported by any facts we have been able to discover. There is no authority for the opinion that the loss of Methodism in these years of strife was to any considerable extent the gain of the new party. And it is extremely doubtful whether, at any period of their history, the followers of O'Kelly ever reached as high as the actual loss of the Church in the years we are now reviewing. In some places, whole Societies united with him; but generally they were parts of Societies, and isolated individuals. A very few of the itinerant ministers seceded with him, and of these some returned to the bosom of the Church. Of Local Preachers, it seems many embraced his cause, but they were *local* still; and the elements of discord and disunion were soon developed in his Societies. These causes, with others hereafter to be noticed, induced a state of things that through premature decline and gradual decay brought a general disruption of the bands of fellowship, and an early dissolution of a Society born in strife and fostered at so great an expense of truth, justice, and love.

It was not long after his secession from the Church, before Mr.

O'Kelly published a small pamphlet, entitled "The Author's Apology for Protesting against the Methodist Episcopal Government." It was signed "Christicola." It was written after the manner of the Chronicles of Scripture, and abounds with misrepresentations of Methodism, perversions of plain facts in its history, and abuse of Bishop Asbury. Indeed, this last seems to have been the moving spring, as it is the pervading feature of the book. Soon after its appearance, Bishop Asbury commenced the collection of materials to expose the statements of the book, and to vindicate his own reputation from its aspersions. He, however, as his personal friends very soon corrected the misrepresentations concerning himself, was spared the necessity of a defence. Public opinion soon settled the question as to the estimate to be placed upon the testimony of a man who, from a warm friend, had been changed into an implacable foe. Still, many of his reflections upon the history and polity of Methodism demanded correction; and the Bishop, after counselling with his friends, submitted his materials to the Conference, for such use as to them might seem proper. The papers were accepted, and referred to a committee of three, with authority to prepare them for publication. Only one of these acted; and he, the Rev. Nicholas Snethen, in "A Reply to an Apology," &c., has not only vindicated Methodism, but placed the pretended facts and groundless assertions of Mr. O'Kelly in a position so variant from truth, as to leave the character of their author more in need of an Apology than was the mere fact of his ceasing to be a Methodist. This Reply called forth "A Vindication of an Apology" from Mr. O'Kelly, and that was met by "An Answer to James O'Kelly's Vindication of his Apology," &c., by Mr. Snethen. A careful examination of both of Mr. Snethen's works, has left us without surprise that the schism was arrested; and Methodism, after the lapse of a few years, restored to tranquillity regained its ground, and stood fairer and firmer than before the commencement of these troubles.

Mr. Lee was not an unconcerned spectator of the scenes consequent upon this division. An actor in the debates which issued in the secession of Mr. O'Kelly, and familiar with his character, he apprehended and predicted the course of the leader of this schism in American Methodism. On another ground he was

deeply interested in the progress of the events of this period of the history of the Church. The fire of this excitement was ravaging the land of his birth, his homestead, and its inmates were exposed to its pernicious influence; and though he was occupied in a distant province of Methodism, he deplored it as a calamity to Christianity, as much as a disaster to the Church of his choice and hope. And so impressed was he with the importance of relieving the character of Bishop Asbury, and the honourable fame of Methodism, from the attacks and imputations of Mr. O'Kelly, that he not only meditated a reply to his book, but actually entered upon the preparation of such a vindication as in his judgment was demanded by the nature and grounds of the attack. He had also a personal reason for this attempt: he was personally referred to, and represented as a party in the schemes of the author of the Apology previous to their developement at, and subsequent to the General Conference of 1792. In the peculiar style adopted by Mr. O'Kelly as the medium of communicating his opinions to the public, he had, in Chapter x. verse 1, introduced Mr. Lee as *helping* him in his schemes to break down the authority of Bishop Asbury, and subvert the government of the Church. "And it came to pass after these things, and Francis (Asbury) had gone on his way to the District Conferences towards the North, I wrote several letters to the different Conferences, through the medium of the President Elders, and *Brother Jesse (Lee) helped me.*" This was too grave a charge against Mr. Lee's affection for the Bishop and his fealty to Methodism, to be suffered in silence. He accordingly commenced a reply, more, however, if we may judge from the fragment that has been preserved, for the defence of the Bishop and the Church, than for the vindication of himself. Apart from what is due to the reputation of Mr. Lee, this fragment is important for its bearing upon the history of the times, and as an exponent of the opinions of a careful observer, familiar with the principles and operations of the Church, and one, too, who was as honest in his opinions as he was fearless in stating and maintaining them. For these reasons, and in the hope of its affording some assistance to any future historian of Methodism, it is given, with a few unimportant omissions, just as it stands in the

manuscript. It is proper, however, to remark, that it seems merely a first sketch, consisting of notes, penned at the time of reading the Apology, unpolished and imperfect. Nor does it seem to have entered into the design of Mr. Lee to do more than correct Mr. O'Kelly, and set in order the facts so strangely perverted or concealed by him. Hence he omits many debateable though irrelevant matters. And it begins and ends abruptly.

"The first division among the Methodists that you had any hand in making, according to your own account, was 'about the year 1779,' Ch. i. v. 15-17, when you were but a young preacher, and no doubt but something of the schismatic pains have followed you from that day till now.

"Chap. iii. 1. The travelling preachers were called together in the great city of Baltimore, in 1784.' I was not at that Conference, not hearing of it in time; but as you were ordained at that time you returned (to Virginia) quite satisfied, and defended the proceedings of the Conference, which plan you now loathe and abhor."

"Chap. iii. 10. The Conference unanimously agreed to submit to John of England in matters of Church government, but we did not.' What you mean here I cannot tell. You first say 'we agreed to submit,' and then say, 'but we did not.' Do you mean that you did not agree, or that you did not comply with your promise? If the former you *speaks* wrongly, and if the latter you *acted* wrongly, unless the promise was first taken away, or out of date,

"Chap. iv. 3. Francis was opposed to a joint Superintendent.' This is not true, for he had the Doctor (Coke) for a joint Superintendent, as you admit in Ch. ii. 13. You opposed the receiving of the person (Whatcoat) appointed by Wesley, and would not consent to it. You acknowledge that you opposed it in saying, 'I did not consider the person adequate to the task, on account of his age, and also that he was a stranger to the wilderness of America. But above all urged that two heads would produce two bodies.' Ch. iv. 5. Here it is clearly proved that you are guilty of what you charge upon the Bishop. However, we see that the thing which you feared is come upon you. Job iii. 25. And, notwithstanding you were not one of the heads, yet you have made a body; but it is a body without a head, and, of course, it is a monster.



"In the same chapter, v. 8, you seem to be displeased at a prevailing report that you left the Methodists because you could not obtain the place of a Bishop. Whoever said ~~this~~ of you I know not. But there is no doubt in the minds of several of your acquaintances, that you were both dissatisfied and displeased at not being made a Bishop. However, I do not believe you left on that account *only*, for I believe you left us both in affection and doctrine before you declared yourself a Republican. And if you had believed firmly with us, on the doctrine of the Trinity, you would not have left us just at the time, and in the manner you did. But being captivated with the doctrine of Swedenborg—that there is not a Trinity of *persons* but of characters in the Godhead, and that the title of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all belonged to Christ, and that no other person was concerned in the Trinity, your mind became evilly affected towards your brethren, and from that time it is supposed you began to look out for a way to make your escape from us.

"You say in the same chapter, v. 9. 'About the year 1787, Francis directed the Preachers that whenever they wrote to him to title him Bishop. They did: and this was the beginning of our spurious Episcopacy.' Is this true? The Bishop says he never gave such directions. I was at Conference when a motion was made for all our Preachers to direct their letters to each other in as plain a manner as they could; and they thought it would be best to leave out Rev. and Mr., and direct them thus: A. B. Bishop, or C. D. Elder, or E. F. Deacon, or G. H. Preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. But this was not the order of any man in particular. It was the conclusion of Conference, and yet every person was left at liberty to direct his letters differently if he chose. And it is very strange that you should declare the directing of letters was 'the beginning of our spurious Episcopacy.' Our Episcopacy was acknowledged in 1784, and you here say it was begun in 1787. What a hard shift you are driven to in order to vent your spite!

"In the 15th verse, you say 'Francis took with him a few chosen men, and in a clandestine manner expelled John, whose surname was Wesley, from the Methodist Episcopal Church.' Worse and

worse. This is telling a lie without cover.\* To tell the truth about the matter (as I was at the Conference, and you were not) it was as follows: At the Conference in Baltimore (1787), the Bishops had a private meeting, with the Elders of the Conference, in a private house, to consult about receiving the person whom Mr. Wesley had appointed to be a joint Superintendent with Mr. Asbury, when some of the company was opposed to receiving him. And it was argued that we had promised to 'submit to Mr. Wesley, in all matters of Church government;' and, according to promise, we were obliged to accept the person appointed by Mr. Wesley. It was then determined to leave out (of the Minutes) that promise. And notwithstanding Mr. Wesley's power was abridged in America, we did not break fellowship with him; but wrote an humble petition to him to come and visit his children; and, for some time, we were in great hopes of a visit from him. How, then, could you assert that Mr. Wesley was expelled, when you knew it was not true! And you say it was done 'in a clandestine manner.' This is not so. It was done in open Conference. What the Bishops and Elders did in private was, to consult as to what was for the best; and then, like honest men, they laid the matter before the Conference: and *the Conference* agreed with them to abridge Mr. Wesley's power of appointing men to govern our Church, without our choice. This thing was not done by Francis, but by the Conference. And this was according to *your* desire; for, in the 7th verse of this chapter, you say of this matter, 'Francis proposed for the Baltimore Conference to decide the dispute; to which we all agreed.'† Here you acknowledge you agreed to leave it to

\* This is plain language, but it is true: and it is sustained by all the facts in the case; and justified by the groundless statements of O'Kelly.

† Mr. O'Kelly here referred to the debate respecting the question of receiving Mr. Whatcoat as a Bishop upon the appointment of Mr. Wesley, at the Virginia Conference at Rough Creek Church, in 1787. Here he strenuously opposed the measure. His charge of the Bishop's opposition to a joint superintendency is groundless; and the Bishop's vindication is complete and unsailable. The following testimony, extracted from Mr. Snethen's Reply, puts this matter perfectly at rest.

"When T. Coke and Mr. Asbury met in Charleston (in 1787), T. Coke informed him, that Mr. Wesley had appointed R. Whatcoat as a joint Superintendent, and Mr. Asbury acquiesced in the appointment; as did the Charleston Conference, when it was laid before them. T. Coke proposed the appointment

that Conference; and, after they settled it, you rise up and say it was done 'in a clandestine manner.' Lord, what is man! The truth is: 1. Mr. Wesley was never expelled from the Methodist Church. 2. What was done in restricting his power in that particular case, was done by the Conference. 3. It was done according to your wish; for you were against receiving the man Mr. Wesley had appointed. Here it is proved you were more active than the rest of your brethren in abridging the power of Mr. Wesley; and yet you try to make the world believe that you were ignorant of the matter, and opposed to the step that was taken.

'Lord, how this world is given to lying!'

"In chapter vii., 9th verse, speaking of the resolutions of the Council (of 1789), of which you were a member, and after its proceedings were published, you say: 'I found myself deceived, and the Church imposed on,' by the Council. While you were

to the Virginia Conference, and, to his great pain and disappointment, James O'Kelly most strenuously opposed it; but consented that the Baltimore Conference might decide it, upon condition that the Virginia Conference might send a deputy to explain their sentiments.

Signed, T. COKE.

January 7, 1796.

"I perfectly remember, that Mr. O'Kelly opposed the appointment of R. Whatcoat; and that Mr. Asbury said enough to him and me, to convince us that he was not opposed to the appointment."<sup>60</sup>

PHILIP BRUCE.

NORFOLK, November 30, 1796.

"Mr. Asbury was not opposed to my being joint Superintendent with himself. After receiving Mr. Wesley's letter, he wrote to me from Charleston, upon the subject. As I have not the letter by me at present, I cannot give the contents verbatim; but as well as I recollect, the conclusion was—'And if so, you must meet me at the Warm Springs, and we will make out a plan for your route through the Continent.'

Signed, R. WHATCOAT."

<sup>60</sup> Mr. Lee in his Review quotes, upon this subject, the following from a letter from Mr. Bruce: "Mr. O'Kelly and myself were the only persons who spoke on the subject—at Rough Creek Conference—of receiving a Bishop upon Mr. Wesley's appointment; and when the Doctor pushed the subject, Mr. O'K. told him, the more he urged the subject the more his fears were alarmed. That Mr. Asbury never opened his mouth on the subject while it was in debate. And that Mr. O'K. was to write to the Baltimore Conference."

in Council assembled, my letter was received and read to the Council; in which I pointed out many errors in the plan of the Council, and suggested evils that would probably accrue from it; and I received the following answer, signed by most of the members of the Council, and your name was among the rest:

“‘ IN COUNCIL, BALTIMORE, December 7, 1789.

“‘ Very dear Bro.: “We are both grieved and surprised to find that you make so many objections to the very fundamentals of Methodism. But we consider *your want of experience* in many things, and therefore put the best construction on your intention. You are acquainted with the Discipline of the Methodist Church: if you can *quietly* labour among us under our Discipline and rules, we cheerfully retain you as our Brother and fellow-labourer, and remain yours in sincere affection.

“‘ JAMES O’KELLY, and others.’

“Here we see how fierce you were upon me about the Council, because I honestly told you what I disliked. But after you had united with your brethren in adopting certain measures, you hurried back to Virginia and began to exclaim against the resolutions you had helped to form, and so began contentions among the private people. You complained heavily of me, and indirectly threatened to turn me out of Church if I was not quiet, because I wrote to the Preachers the objections I had to make; and then you yourself began to exclaim bitterly against your own plan, and to lay all the blame upon those who were united with you. In this is fulfilled the saying of the Apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 2: “For men shall be lovers of their own selves.”

“Chapter x. v. 1. You say ‘I wrote several letters to the different Conferences through the medium of the President Elders, and Brother Jesse helped me a little.’ Wherein I helped you I cannot tell, unless it was in writing to the Council. And if that helped you, I am sure you ought to have asked my pardon for intimating that you would turn me out from among you if I was not quiet. If I helped you by writing against your plan in 1789, I hope I shall help you to see and understand things better by writing against you also at this time.”

Here end our quotations from the manuscript. To its full extent it is a complete refutation of the Apology. Whether it was ever completed, we cannot speak certainly. From an unfinished sentence at the foot of the last page, we may safely conclude it to have been larger. We are happy in rescuing so much of it from oblivion, especially as it throws light upon some facts of our earlier history, and confirms contemporaneous evidence upon others. It is obvious that Mr. Lee had very little confidence in the integrity of Mr. O'Kelly, and it would seem the author of the Apology must have calculated largely upon the indifference of his former companions, or have been strangely defective in memory or conscience, before venturing to put forth as an apology for schism, a work so full of error with respect to facts, and so self-contradictory in its principles and statements.

The success of Mr. O'Kelly in gaining proselytes from Methodism was comparatively small. It is believed to have been less in making converts from the world. Still, although partial, it was full of disaster to the cause of religion, and a deadly evil to the souls of multitudes. The picture of these evils, drawn by Mr. Lee, is affecting to the pious mind. It is full of sad memorials. The children of the Church were transformed into aliens and strangers. Friends were turned into enemies. Brother differed with brother, and children and parents stood opposed to each other. Societies were ruptured, friendships severed, the bonds of affection were broken—questions of Church government absorbed the interests of religion; and personal piety, devoid of present peace, and without provision for future need, gleaned in a vintage that the necessities of former years had left without fruit even in the top-most branches. Pious duties were neglected, and the means of grace abandoned, and, as a natural consequence, backslidings were numerous and awful. Sad inroads were made upon the peace and unity of Methodism by this needless schism. But God mercifully interposed for the people whom he had raised up, and by the revival of his work, as well as by turning to foolishness the counsel of O'Kelly, peace was restored to the Church, and long years of prosperity again blessed the labours of God's chosen servants.

The causes mainly contributing to the failure of this effort to rend the body of Christ, are palpable, and cannot fail to interest

the student of Ecclesiastical history. They are to be found in the character of the leader of the schism, and in the doctrinal heresy it was his purpose to propagate. Separately, they are sufficient to ruin the best intentioned efforts; but combined as they were in the O'Kellyan schism, they were without elements to attract the heart, or power to influence the mind. And hence it failed—miserably failed to benefit its own partisans, or to promote, in any sense, the public good.

In referring to the *character* of Mr. O'Kelly as a cause of his failure to build up a party, it is not intended to impeach him as a religious man, except in so far as his doctrinal errors may subject his Christian character to suspicion. Believing that goodness of heart and sincerity of religious principle are compatible, and often mixed with serious heresies, we may very safely regard Mr. O'Kelly as, in this respect, a good man, without endorsing his capability to lead such a movement as he had the temerity to set on foot. It is in his character as a *leader* that we must perceive the existence of elements that would preclude the possibility of success. From his own statements in his Apology, he had long been disaffected to Methodism; and, if honest in his hostility, he must have meditated secession previous to the defeat of his Appeal measure at the General Conference of 1792.\* And yet his whole subsequent history presents him as a leader without system, a reformer without a fixed object or a definite plan. For popular effect he assumed, for himself and his followers, the appellation of Republican Methodists. It was at a time of high political excitement between the Republicans and Federalists. In Virginia the former were very popular; and it was a political advantage to be a Republican. The fortunes of O'Kellyism depended upon the smile of the populace. These smiles were only given to Republicans; and whatever else the new party might be with respect to Methodism, they were to be Republicans in religion. This principle prevailed in the government of the new system; and it seems to have formed an element of their organiza-

\* A series of letters at the close of Mr. Sæthen's second pamphlet, from a Preacher for some years intimate with Mr. O'Kelly, will confirm this opinion, and also prove him to have looked with no small anxiety to the Episcopal office. Indeed, his bitterness against it must have been prompted by mortified ambition.

tion. For, in a few years, when perhaps Republicanism, as a principle of political cohesiveness, had waned in the popular estimation, they attempted a correction of their false movement, and after gravely discarding it, they assumed, in 1801, the name of *the Christian Church*. Again, as an evidence of the incapacity of Mr. O'Kelly for the task of reforming the Church, we find, that at their first meeting, "at the Mannakin Town, on the 25th day of December, 1793,\* they formally adopted a constitution for their government in Ecclesiastical affairs. And at a subsequent period they threw human constitutions to the winds, "renounced all rules of Church government," adopted the New Testament as their rule, and reduced their former constitution and laws to the condition of mere advisory regulations. These changes of title and law produced great commotions. Many were opposed to them. Some clung to the old standards; others thought to remodel them; and others, with the presiding genius of the whole movement at their head, went out in search of new things. Divisions came; and to settle the strife new parties were created. Ministers separated from the Conferences, the people followed them. New measures were attempted and failed. Dissension was succeeded by distrust; and confusion, seizing the reins, drove them headlong down the steep of time into the gulf of oblivion.

But, in examining the causes of such a defeat, we may not omit a brief notice of the doctrinal error that pervaded, like a lurking poison, the whole system of Mr. O'Kelly. As already seen, he was a heretic—a rejecter of one of the chief doctrines of revealed religion. He denied the distinct personality of the Holy Trinity. He affirmed that instead of distinct *persons* in the Godhead, the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were only intended to represent three *offices* of one glorious and Eternal Being. It was a favourite expression, as we learn from a living contemporary, that "God was Father from eternity, Redeemer in time, and Sanctifier for evermore." This was "the dead fly" in his doctrinal system. In the presence of an error so profound with respect to the Trinity, and so pervasive in the ministrations of the pulpit, as this must have

\* A manuscript copy of this Constitution, now before me, bears this title: "The Constitution of the Republican Methodists." Its system of government is meagre and imperfect.

been, it is not surprising to find the ministry of the new party inefficient for the comfort of its partisans and the awakening of sinners. Indeed, it forms a striking fact in the history of the secession, that whatever else it may have effected, it did very little for the conversion of sinners. And no marvel. There is not in the compass of such a creed, properly understood, a solitary element of the doctrine that is according to godliness,—the doctrine of atonement by Jesus Christ, and of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. The denial of the distinct personal existence of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in one glorious Godhead, divests Atonement of its efficacy, and Divinity of its grandeur; and leaves the sinner unjustified before God, shut up to the necessity of unbelief, and bound in chains of hopeless impenitence. A Church built upon such a foundation could not be said to have the breath of spiritual life. It might be full of dead men's bones. And, without belying its creed, no breath of God could breathe life and joy and hope into their dead carcasses. Yet such was the creed of O'Kelly. We dare not say its members were not saved; but we declare our conviction that the party was compelled to die. Great and awful as was this heresy, Mr. O'Kelly had for some years succeeded in concealing it from the body of the ministry. But it was known to a few; and one of them was prepared to impeach him for his heretical sentiments, when he so suddenly abandoned the Conference in 1792.\* It is not improbable but his apprehension of arrest may have precipitated his rupture with the Conference, and his flight from the city. He knew the Church would not tolerate a heresy such as he had embraced, and foreseeing the evil of impeachment and the certainty of conviction, he hid himself by retiring beyond the jurisdiction of the Conference. He was in a strait betwixt expulsion and secession; and he chose the latter, for the compound purpose of prolonging his ministerial existence and of propagating his favourite, but unfortunate notion of the Trinity.

The subsequent history of this mournful affair is briefly told. Unrelieved by any nearer approach to truth, and unenlivened by the blessing of God vouchsafed to faithful and holy men, it continued to descend in the scale of religious influence, until the zeal of its

\* Hist. Methodists, p. 180.



first love was extinct; and then, with its body of death—a heresy that precluded spiritual life—pressing upon an imperfect organization, its efforts circumscribed, and its numbers lessened, it dragged out a few years of inefficiency, and expired as a system of organized religion. Or, if not entirely extinct, it exists only in detached and powerless fragments, so transmuted by time and men's opinions that its author's hand is not seen, his name scarcely remembered by the party he formed, and he himself might question its identity or dispute its pretensions. It is due, however, to truth, to add that Mr. O'Kelly seems to have retained, to the latest period of his life, unabated confidence in the purity and power of his system. In age and feebleness his hope in the work of his hands did not desert him. He went down to the grave, according to one of his followers, satisfied with the past, and peaceful and trusting with respect to the future.\* He departed this life on the 16th of October, 1826, in the ninety-second year of his age.

For the purpose of completing our review of the O'Kellyan schism, we have extended this chapter far in advance of the history of Mr. Lee; and have even omitted some notices of the General Conference of 1792, that properly belong to this portion of the work. But the course we have adopted was deemed better for the reader. And so far as the other proceedings of the General Conference may fall into our plan, they can be introduced hereafter without detriment to our arrangement, or loss of interest to any who may feel anxious to examine them.

\* See a brief obituary, by Rev. John P. Lemay, attached to an edition of the Apology, published in Hillsborough, N. C., in 1839.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1792, TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1796.

Mr. Lee visits Virginia—Witnesses the Effects of the O'Kellyan Agitation in Virginia—Returns to New England—Lynn—Tour on his District—Conference in Lynn—Appointed to "Province of Maine"—Enters his Work—Forms a Circuit—Trials—A new District—Defects of Health and Faith—Courtesy of a Baptist—Inhospitable Treatment—First Church in Rhode Island—Spiritual Ignorance—Good Fruits—First Society in Maine—Anecdote—Nearly perishes from Cold—Shouting Scene in the Road—Great Spiritual Destitution—A powerful Meeting—A dancing Baptist—Island of Martha's Vineyard—A Backslider reclaimed—Birth-day Feelings—Antinomianism rebuked—New Brunswick—First Church in Maine—Conference in New London—Stationed in Boston—Lays the Corner-stone of a Church—On the Commons—Mob in Provincetown—A Calvinist in a Dilemma—A Quarrel; or, Preaching vs. Dancing—Losing a Will—Schism in Charleston, S. C.—General Conference in 1796—Revision—Boundaries of Conferences—Deed of Settlement—Chartered Fund—Local Preachers—Grant of Ordination—Episcopacy of Dr. Coke—Mr. Lee's Views and Participation in the Conference Business—His Character by a Contemporary.

THE secession of Mr. O'Kelly and his adherents, of which a somewhat detailed account is given in the preceding chapter, occasioned sincere grief in the General Conference. They could not part with an old fellow-soldier of the cross without feeling. "Many of the Preachers wept heartily," as Mr. Lee testifies in his Journal, when his letter, announcing his intention to leave the travelling connexion, was read in the Conference. And for himself, he says: "It was a sorrowful day to me, yet I could say the will of the Lord be done." Mr. O'Kelly had occupied an important post, and filled a large place in the confidence and affections of Methodism. But much as they loved him, they loved the Church more. And they could part with him, sooner than surrender an important principle of their Ecclesiastical economy. Between two such evils there could be no hesitation in choosing, and subsequent events confirmed the wisdom of their choice. After this affair, nothing

occurred to disturb the harmony of the body. On the afternoon of the 15th, they adjourned "in much love and friendship;" and at night Dr. Coke, about to return to England, preached a farewell sermon that left a subdued and hallowing impression upon the minds of these servants of the Most High God.

Leaving Baltimore, Mr. Lee turned his steps toward his father's house. It was nearly five years since he left the paternal roof; and during his absence his mother had departed to the place of her rest, with the redeemed and happy in heaven. In his journey he attended two Conferences, one in Alexandria, and the other in Manchester. He also spent a Sunday in Richmond, and, in the afternoon, preached in the Capitol, on 1 Pet. ii. 2. "I suppose," he remarks, "I had more than half of the members of the General Assembly to hear me, and many of them appeared to be very attentive: I felt great freedom in speaking. I am sure the Lord was in the midst of us. My own heart was much melted within me. I felt a hope that some good was done in the name of the Lord Jesus." The next day he attended Conference in Manchester. It was here the events respecting Mr. O'Kelly, and the withdrawal of some of the Preachers, previously referred to, transpired. Bishop Asbury seems to have anticipated an unpleasant session, as he had entered the district over which Mr. O'Kelly had so long presided. But in this he was happily disappointed. He "met the Preachers in band, and found their fears greatly removed: union and love prevailed, and all things went on well." In closing his business here, the Bishop remarks: "The General Conference and the district Conferences have kept us a long time from our work; but after all Satan's spite, I think our *sifting* and *shaking* will be for good: I expect a glorious revival will take place in America, and thousands be brought to God."

After spending some days with his brothers and their families, several of whom resided in Petersburg, Mr. Lee reached his father's on the last day of the year, and preached on Rom. xiii. 12: "*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*" The subject was appropriate to the period; but the fact of his preaching is mentioned because it serves to illustrate the habits of the early Methodist Preachers, in their readiness to preach always

and everywhere—instant in season and out of season—a habit that, perhaps, more than anything else, secured to them the appellation of *Preachers*, rather than that of parson, minister, or clergyman. And they deserved the title, not more from the frequency of their preaching, than from their ability to preach; and, in dependence upon the effectual working of the Spirit, from their almost exclusive reliance upon preaching for the accomplishment of the work whereunto they were called. Certainly they did not rely upon the Sacraments, nor Church authority, for their success in bringing souls to God. They felt inwardly moved to preach the gospel, and they knew that it was by the *preaching* of the cross that men were to be saved—and they were preachers in the true apostolic sense of the term, who loved to preach the kingdom of God, and by whose preaching the kingdom of God was established in these lands.

In social and Christian intercourse with his friends and relations, Mr. Lee spent nearly a month; and, during the time, he preached seventeen sermons, and “attended many other meetings.” There was but one abatement to the pleasures of this visit to his early home; there was a sad declension in religion. Hearts once warm with holy love, souls once inflamed with heavenly zeal, were now lukewarm, if not cold and dead. First love was gone, and the Church was fruitless. A season of barrenness and desolation had succeeded the long years of refreshing with which the Church in Virginia had been favoured; and they were now drinking of the bitter cup, that neglect of duty and declension from God puts to the lips of a Christian people. It is probable, too, the spirit of dissension was putting forth its hand to vex the Church. It is at least true the state of religion was such as to authorize the opinion that whatever success attended the secession of O’Kelly, is to be attributed, not so much to the laborious zeal of the seceders, or the popularity of their opinions and measures, as to the lukewarmness of the Church, superinducing a readiness to substitute party spirit for Christian love, and zeal for an opinion for Christian diligence and devotion. Mr. Lee was painfully conscious of this declension. He could see it in the cold formality of their worship, in the altered fervour of their feelings. Hence he remarked: “It is not with

these people, as it was when I was here before. Then they were much alive to God; but religion is very low now."

After remaining nearly a month with his friends, Mr. Lee returned to his own field of labour. On his way thither, he spent some days in Baltimore, preaching and begging money for the purpose of building a house of worship in Boston. In this he was generously assisted by a gentleman of the city; and he says: "We were pretty successful." Leaving Baltimore, he visited and preached at Cokesbury College. Thence to New York, and through his old circuit, preaching as he went, to Boston; reaching the latter place on the 20th of February, 1793. The next day he rode to Lynn—his favourite home in New England. Two causes united to make him rejoice to be at home again—the society of old and cherished friends, and the prosperous condition in which he found the Church. They had been blessed with a gracious revival during his absence. On Sunday, he preached a sermon intended as a salutation on his return—a counterpart of the one preached on leaving them. His text was 2 Sam. xx. 9: *Art thou in health, my brother?* He pointed out some of the maladies of the soul, and the means and method of their cure, and then made a close application upon the present state of their souls; whether they were then in spiritual health? It was a time of heart-searching and heart-exulting. At the close of the sermon, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered, three adults were baptized, and several were added to the Church. He continued in Lynn, engaged in pastoral duties, until the 18th of March, when he entered upon a general visitation of the appointments in his district. Signs of promise generally greeted him in this tour. He mentions one indication of the growing popularity of Methodism. In Marblehead, where he had frequently preached, the word began to take hold of the hearts of the people. At least, they felt a greater interest in it; and he found, on one of his visits, the people had hired an upper room, and placed seats in it, for worship; "which is more respect than they ever showed us before." His first sermon in it was appropriately selected from Lam. iii. 26; and their meeting was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. He found great liberty in teaching them the way to heaven, and was encouraged quietly to wait for the revelation of God's mercy to them. In

pastoral duties, in Lynn and Boston, and occasional excursions to the adjacent circuits in Connecticut and Rhode Island, he filled up the remainder of the Conference year.

Thus far, in his labours in New England, we have seen Mr. Lee almost exclusively as a pioneer, braving the difficulties of an evangelist in carrying the pure truth and power of the gospel to a people who, with priests and churches, were, for the most part, as it respects spiritual life, in the region of the shadow of death. And we may be tempted to believe that in this kind of labour only he was fitted to shine. But it would be wrong to adopt such a conclusion. He could not only clear the ground, but he could plant and cultivate it; and also bring forward the harvest, gather it into the store-house, and preserve it with a husbandman's care. Indeed, he was a most excellent Methodist Pastor, keeping the rules, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake. Visiting from house to house for religious conversation and prayer; catechizing the children in classes; and, wherever he met them in his visits, teaching them "the way wherein they should go;" leading the classes, and visiting the sick. In these labours he found full employment for his head and his heart; and his pastoral industry made his presence a joy and a blessing wherever he went. He was welcome to the homes of his flock; and he could always find his way to their hearts, as a messenger preparing the way, and announcing the coming of the Lord.

On the 1st of August, 1793, a Conference was held in Lynn, for the convenience of the Preachers employed in New England, and for the furtherance of the work of God. It was a small body of men. Beside the Bishop, there were only eight Preachers in attendance. If weak numerically, they were strong in faith, full of zeal for God and the souls of men, and burning with desire to make Methodism a praise and a glory for its success in bringing sinners into the fold of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Of the business proceedings of this Conference, beyond the mere appointments, we can learn nothing. In a note respecting this meeting, Bishop Asbury remarks: "I have now finished my work at Lynn. Circumstances have occurred which have made this Conference more painful than any one Conference beside." What these circumstances were, it is impossible at this distance of time

to ascertain; and perhaps it is fortunate that only so much of them is known, as is contained in the brief reflection of the Bishop. It is often wise "to conceal a matter," especially when its publication does not tend to edification.

At this Conference, Mr. Lee received a *large*, as well as a new appointment. He was again to penetrate "the regions beyond," and open a pathway for Methodism where, as yet, its voice had not reached, and its character was scarcely known. His name stands on the list for the "Province of Maine and Lynn." Distant as Maine was, he was not to be entirely expatriated from the fellowship of Methodism; and Lynn was united to the new circuit, to be a kind of city of refuge, to which he might resort for relief and comfort from the privations and discouragements incident to a pioneer's life in a rude and uncultivated frontier,—for such was Maine in 1793. It was a new country in many respects: sparsely settled, with an odd mixture of many "kindred, nations, tongues, and people;" poorly cultivated, by a people of plain manners, with very little refinement, and a loose morality. Of religion, except in a few of the more populous settlements, in so far as it is developed by the presence of ministers, churches, and the means of grace, there was very little in the Province. The ministers who wait for calls had not received them; and as a general thing, they are not received from those who are at ease in sin; and the mere presence of sinners is not regarded as a very potent element in a *call*. But, poor and rude as were the people, they had been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; and Christ authorized His Ministers to preach the gospel to every creature. So the Conference at Lynn, reasoning upon the general principles of Methodist doctrine and usage, concluded; and learning there were sinners in Maine, resolved to send them the word of salvation,—and who so fit a bearer of the message as Mr. Lee?

A few weeks after the adjournment of Conference, he entered upon what in those days was a journey of considerable magnitude. Leaving Lynn, he passed through Newburyport into New Hampshire, Greenland, and Portsmouth, preaching as he went, and thence on the 10th of September entered Maine, and "at a *little village* called Saco," on the same night preached in a private

"house crowded with attentive hearers," on Acts xiii. 41. As the most of his time, until the Conference of 1794, was employed in the formation of a circuit in Maine, we may very properly give a brief narrative of his labours, abridged from his History of the Methodists. From Saco, he went to Castine, at the mouth of the Penobscot River, thence along the river to the upper settlements near Old Town, and returned by the way of Twenty-five Mile Pond to Kennebec River; thence up to Sandy River, and back to Hallowell, and through to Portland. "Although I was a perfect stranger, and had to make my own appointments, I preached almost every day, and had crowded assemblies to hear. After viewing the country, I thought the most proper place to form a circuit would be on the west side of the Kennebec." Here the first circuit in Maine was formed, and it is known in the Minutes of the period as Readfield. It was nearly two hundred miles beyond the circuits already formed in New England. It extended from Hallowell to Sandy River. It was not long after the formation of this circuit, and the establishment of regular preaching, before God mercifully vouchsafed His blessing to those who went forth sowing precious seed. Sinners were converted, and sought Church fellowship with those from whom they had received "the good word of God." Societies were soon formed; Churches were erected, and Methodism started out upon a wide career of usefulness, with stirring zeal and vigorous hope.

It is not to be supposed that in this labour of love the pioneer of Methodism in Maine sailed on a stormless sea, or slept on "flowery beds of ease." Difficulties as numerous and strong awaited him here, as any he had previously met. But he had learned to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;" and he toiled on, in labours abundant, with uncomplaining patience and immovable resolution. In one place the people were so pleased with his ministry, that they invited him to settle among them as their pastor, promising him good pay for his services. But he declined, saying, "I am no hireling." Freely he received the gospel, freely he offered its salvation to others. Upon these terms they might have it, without money and without price. It was not theirs, but them he was seeking; and not for himself, but for Him who loved them, and gave Himself a ransom for their souls.



Having succeeded in arranging a regular plan for preaching through a large district of country, many of whose inhabitants were entirely destitute of the means of grace, seldom heard a sermon, and knew very little of religion; he returned to Lynn in time to attend the Conference held there on the 25th of July, 1794. Of the business of this Conference, who were present, and what was done, every trace seems to have vanished, beyond the mere appointments and the report of the numbers in Society.

On the Minutes for 1794, Mr. Lee stands as Elder to a newly-formed district, comprising Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. Here, although the field of his labour was enlarged, it did not embrace a great deal of new ground. With much of it he was acquainted, and yet it extended over so large a territory, not yet comprehended in the field of Methodism, that he was still at liberty to search out new places, and carry the gospel to those who had it not. And he was as enterprising in this matter now, as he had been at any previous period of his ministry. His elevation to the office of Elder could only be gratifying in so far as it gave him the freedom to indulge his desire of being the first to carry the message of salvation, as held and taught by Methodists, to those who were perplexed into indifference by "the doctrines of grace," and confounded into apathy by sovereign power operating through eternal decrees. He loved to carry to a people thus estranged from God, and perplexed as to their own duty with respect to religion, the system of truth that, taking the grand fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, as its great central doctrine, works out, upon the conscience of a sinner, and without any elaboration of argument, the joyous conviction that "God will have all men to be saved," and that whosoever will, may come and take of the water of life freely. He loved to preach a free and full salvation.

In entering upon the duties of his office, Mr. Lee laboured under two difficulties, each presenting formidable obstacles to his success, and either sufficient to dishearten a less zealous man; he was seriously unwell, and he was weak in faith. But his indomitable energy of character would be brought into subjection to neither. The former yielded to perseverance in exercise, aided by simple medical treatment. The latter he withstood to the face, because

it was to be blamed. Yet these combined evils reduced him to a state of sad spiritual depression, and constrained the confession—"My mind was variously exercised, and I was in a mournful condition." His prayer was, "Lord help *me*." Again he says: "The Lord seemed very near me at times, but I did not have that faith for the people that I have generally had in other places." Yet, "upon strict examination, I felt confidence in God, and a pleasing hope of heaven." Humbled and dejected, but neither forsaken nor without hope, he persisted in the path of duty, filled his appointments, and left the issue of his trials and afflictions with the God of his salvation. In the midst of these calamities he attended a Conference held in Wilbraham, and the morning after his arrival, preached on 2 Cor. xii. 9: *My grace is sufficient for thee*. While speaking, the fire burned, the sun of righteousness pierced the clouds that hovered round his heart, beams of heavenly light irradiated his mind, and his soul stood in the sun-light of joy and love. "I felt the grace of God sufficient for me at the time, and I was willing to trust him all the days of my life. O! what a precious sense of the love of Jesus my soul enjoyed." In the strength of that blessing he journeyed many days of painfulness and weariness to the flesh, but of holy serenity and abounding comfort to his spirit.

It was a strange thing in those days, in prejudiced New England, for a Methodist Preacher to receive even courteous, omitting as utterly out of the question, all reference to friendly treatment from any of the settled pastors. It is not marvellous then that a little incident out of the ordinary line of indifference should be mentioned with a sincere gratification by Mr. Lee. Returning from Wilbraham, he spent a Sabbath in New London. In the evening the Rev. Mr. Darrough, a Baptist, came in and took tea with him at the house of a widow. A very friendly conversation as to the progress and success of religion ensued. In the course of it Mr. Lee "told him if he did not take care the Methodists would outdo him." "I don't know how they will go about it!" "Why, we will out-preach you, outlive you, and outlove you." "Well," was the truly Christian reply, "you may, but if you do, you shall have hard work for it: for I intend to love God with all my soul, and then if you outlove me your vessel must be bigger than mine." Here was a truly spiritual emulation—the only emulation a Chris-

tian can indulge with safety to his soul. Happy would it be for the world if such a spirit pervaded the hearts of all who bear the Christian name.

The transition from "grave to gay" is not more common to the feelings of some men than was the change from respect to rudeness a common element in the history of the efforts to give Methodism a place and a name in the land of the Puritans. Passing into Rhode Island, Mr. Lee encountered a man whose feelings belonged to a very different zone from those of the good man in the scene just related. He had been directed to call upon a Colonel B—, in Coventry, and he reached the house about sunset, when the following dialogue occurred.

"Have you not entertained the Methodist Preachers sometimes?"

"Yes. I have sometimes."

"Would you be willing to entertain another?"

"I would *full as leave*, if it suited them as well, if they would go along."

"Well then, I will go along."

And *go along* he did, or his horse carried him. For night, dark, dreary, and desolate, with its voiceless solitude soon enveloped him. He was a stranger and alone. Little as he knew of the path, his knowledge availed him nothing; it was so dark he could not see it, and sometimes the deep gloom of night hid from his strained sight the head of his horse. Beside the Providence in which he trusted at all times with a joyous confidence, he had one other source of consolation—his horse had travelled the path before. He gave him a loose rein, and the faithful animal bore him in safety to the hospitable residence of General Lippett, where, although the family had retired to rest, he received a cheerful welcome, and such attentions as his circumstances required. It may be that the fact, as creditable to the family as it was gratifying to Mr. Lee, that the wife and daughter were under deep religious awakenings, produced by a sermon he had preached on a former visit, had a considerable share in securing these hospitalities to the man of God who had forsaken *home* and friends to preach Christ to a strange people. The two facts, so strongly in contrast, will serve somewhat to illustrate the lights and shadows of itinerant life. A cup of cold water

given to a disciple for the sake of Christ, shall in no wise go unrewarded.

The first Church built for the Methodists in Rhode Island was dedicated in Warren, a few days subsequent to the lonely night-ride in Coventry. Mr. Lee preached the sermon at the opening of this house, on the 24th of September. The text for the occasion was Haggai ii. 9. There was a considerable Society in the place; and they already possessed an abundance of the *peace* promised in the text. At a class-meeting held at night after the dedication, "the power of the Lord was amongst them, and many souls were happy in His love." Their hearts, with their house, were dedicated to God, as those that were alive from the dead; and they were accepted in the Beloved. At this place he completed his first tour on the district, and from hence he returned to Lynn, for brief and necessary repose after a fatiguing campaign of two months. He was not inactive while resting. Relieved from the stirring duties of regular itinerant preaching, he resorted for usefulness and personal comfort to the more quiet employments of pastoral visiting. Here he was not less at home than when in the presence of multitudes, pointing sinners to the way of life by the blood of atonement. In the family circle he desired to sow good seed, knowing that in due season they would spring up and yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. So impressed was his mind with the importance of this field of ministerial usefulness, that with all his desire to do good, he was constrained to cry out with the Apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" "O, how much I am wanting," he writes, "in faithfulness and watchfulness in my religious visits!" Earnestly desiring to accomplish a large measure of good to the souls for whom Christ died, and feeling his insufficiency, he sought in deeper spirituality a higher qualification for this rich and promising field of usefulness. He longed to make a sacrifice of himself to God, to be the Lord's by consecration and covenant, that every act of his life and every member of his body might be an instrument of righteousness unto holiness. He wished to turn *many* to righteousness.

On the 3d of November he entered upon a second tour to the remotest points of his district. In following him we shall be compelled to omit many of the daily scenes that give his pioneer life so

deep an interest in the present periods of Methodism. In one place he lodged with a Quaker, found him quite friendly, and, unlike the one he encountered the first year of his itinerancy, "he was quite reconciled to prayers, night and morning." In another place, after preaching on the experimental power of religion, he had the mortification to discover he had shot over the heads of his hearers—none of them having any knowledge of even "the first principles of the oracles of God," and only stared in mute amazement at the stranger who brought such strange things to their ears. Here Antinomianism eating up every green thing in the garden of the Lord; there, wide doors and willing hearts waiting for the consolation of Israel; and everywhere fields white unto the harvest, without a reaper to thrust in the sickle; and souls perishing without an eye to pity or a hand stretched out to save. His soul was stirred within him when he saw the desolations of the land; and in perils in the wilderness, perils on the water; in cold and hunger and weariness, he dared danger and death if he might pluck some of them as brands from the burning. His love for souls was of too fiery a nature to be chilled by the frosts of the severe winter upon which he was entering.

A year had elapsed, since Mr. Lee entered for the first time the moral desolations of Maine. He was now returning to water the seed he had then scattered in good soil, and to watch the progress of the springing plants. The Rev. P. Wager was now filling the circuit formed the preceding year, and God was graciously blessing his labours and fulfilling the prayers which his predecessor in the field, in faith and patience, had left upon the mercy-seat. After reaching Maine, it was a matter of devout gratitude to Mr. Lee to hear, as he did from various places, that the good hand of God was turned upon the people; that revivals were beginning and in progress; and that souls, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, were rejoicing in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. On reaching Monmouth, he found a few members of the sect everywhere spoken against. He preached, and God moved upon the hearts of many. "I met the class," he says, "and was happy to hear from the people's own mouth, what the Lord had done for their souls. There are about fifteen in class, and most of them profess to be happy in God. This class has been formed but a few weeks, and

is the first ever formed in the province of Maine. May they be as the little cloud, which at first was like a man's hand, but soon covered the heavens." And so it proved to be. His next visit was to Readfield. Here also a class of seventeen had been collected out of the world, and brought into fellowship with the people of God.\* In meeting with them, he had a precious season. It was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, to all; and there were signs of better times in the community. Many were truly alive to the importance of religion; some were seeking God with strong crying and tears; and there were on every hand the most delightful indications of a general turning to God. As one of these signs, it may be stated that the Society had already entered upon the erection of a house of worship. Indeed, it was near its completion, and was soon after set apart for the holy uses of religion. Only one kind of opposition seems to have been elicited by the progress of Methodism in this place; and that was from the Antinomianism of a small congregation of Baptists. They seemed greatly to fear the Methodists would do harm! Mr. Lee says their minister, Isaac Case, often tells his people they are *case-hardened*.

It was winter, severe winter for the cold latitude in which Mr. Lee was going about doing good. His exposure was necessarily great, and his sufferings were sometimes extreme—dangerous alike to health and life. We give an instance of the tax upon his personal comfort by these constant exposures to cold. Having a long ride to make, he started in the early morning of a remarkably cold day. His course lay through a lonely wilderness, and he was without company to cheer the tedious miles of his journey. In one place, he rode seven or eight miles without seeing a house. As the day advanced, the cold seemed to penetrate the pores of his skin, to congeal his blood, and freeze the marrow of his bones. His feet seemed to have reached freezing-point. He drew a mitten over the toe of his shoe, and partially arrested its progress. He trembled in every joint and muscle. His flesh became rigid and dry; and his whole frame rolled in convulsive throes as if under the pressure of the death-ague. In this painful condition, night,

\* Both of these Societies were formed in November 1794. See Hist. Methodists, p. 216.

gloomy and starless, came down upon the wilderness and its solitary traveller. Weary miles yet stretched their lengthening lines before him, and the road was rough and fatiguing. But he toiled on resolutely and without murmuring, strengthening himself in the Lord, who brought him safely to his destination, and provided him so kind a reception that he soon forgot his sufferings in the joys of a cheerful hospitality. But, though forgotten, they were not removed. For a week, the flesh of his face and throat were sore and painful as if pinched and bruised by an instrument of torture.

The next day he preached to the people, and so delightful was the service to his hearers and himself, that, notwithstanding his sufferings in getting to the place, he could not regret having gone to it. In the afternoon, on his way to Farmington, he met with an incident somewhat novel, but highly interesting to his pious feelings, and full of encouragement in his self-denying efforts to save souls from perishing. In his solitary ride he overtook a company of females returning from the place of worship. One of them was praising God for his goodness to her soul; and the others were weeping in sympathy, and in sorrow for their sins. On reaching the party, the rejoicing Christian took his hand, and poured out her soul in gratitude and praise to God. "My soul," he writes, "was transported with the pleasing sound; but how unfashionable it is to hear people praise God along the road!" But unfashionable as it is, it might be adopted as a custom with more reason for its justification, than can be found for many fashions that rule the world with blind and capricious tyranny. There may be a period when such scenes may be common; when valley and hill-top, and public highways, may be bursting forth with praise from thousands of redeemed and happy hearts; "when one shall not say to another, Know ye the Lord, but when all shall know him, from the least even to the greatest." Even so: Come, Lord Jesus; and come quickly!

The spiritual destitution of large tracts of country through which Mr. Lee passed, is as surprising, as it is painful to a pious mind. Families and neighbourhoods were lying on every hand—a moral desolation. The feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things seldom or never trod their highways, or penetrated their dwellings. The wilderness was there, but there was no

voice in it crying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord! Everything in morals partook of the general destitution. Children were untrained for heaven; families had no religious associations to inspire a just sense of the duties and responsibilities of life; and communities were without altars for worship, or ministers to "point to brighter worlds, and lead the way." Darkness was in all the land, filling the minds of the people with gloom, and bowing down their hearts to the dust; clothing the present with uncertainty, and the future with despair; and keeping them all their lifetime in bondage, through fear of death! To a mind alive to the importance of religion, and anxious to bring sinners to the knowledge of Christ, as Mr. Lee's was, such a state of destitution must have been a cause of constant sorrow. It did enlist all his sympathies; and constrained him, in season and out of season, to raise his voice of warning and encouragement, if haply he might save a soul from death. Along the road, in the solitary house by the way-side, he preached Christ no less fervently than he did in the social circle, and the public assembly. Sometimes he would enter the solitary dwellings by the way-side, introduce the subject of religion, gather the family around him, and offer prayer to God for their salvation; and be up and away, perhaps, to perform a similar office of Christian devotedness at the next house that might lie in his path. Or, approaching a more populous neighbourhood, he would enter a house and say, "I am a Preacher of the gospel, and would be glad to preach to you and your neighbours, if you will allow me to do so;" and then send, or carry the notice from house to house, collect the people, and preach the gospel of the grace of God to souls who had not heard it for years, and might not have an opportunity of hearing it again for years to come. And such was the simple and affectionate earnestness with which he besought them to be reconciled to God, that he was in almost every instance importuned to repeat his visit, or to send some other minister to teach them the way of salvation. In one of these excursions he came upon one of those scenes of desolation which show how deep a curse is war to all the interests of civilization and religion. It was at Norridgewock Point, at the mouth of Sandy River, where, in previous years, the Indians had a house for public worship, and a minister of God. But during the war of the Revolution, a party



of English soldiers came upon the settlement while they were engaged in devotion, and killed the man of God, and most of the Indian men. It was now a scene of sorrow and desolation, a mournful illustration of the doctrine that wars and fightings come from the lusts of the unrenewed heart of man.

Of the gracious power of the Holy Spirit in convincing of sin, the following account is recorded by Mr. Lee:—At one place, permission to preach had been asked and refused. He rode a short distance, found an open door, and preached on John xi. 3. "I had a crowded congregation, and the melting presence of God was amongst us. Many of the people could hardly refrain from weeping aloud. After I had dismissed the people, and gone into another room, a man came in to speak to me, and burst into tears. Another came in with tears in his eyes, and begged that I would preach again at night. I could not refuse. Some of the people then went home, but soon returned. One man being in deep distress, began to cry aloud to God to have mercy upon his poor soul; and thus he continued to cry with all his might, until some of the people were much frightened. I talked, prayed, and sung; and while I was singing, a visible alteration took place in his countenance, and I was inclined to think his soul was set at liberty. He afterwards spoke as though he believed it was so. About this time, another man was seized with a trembling, and began to pray to the Lord to have mercy upon his poor soul, and cried aloud for some time. I then took my text, and preached on 1 Pet. v. 7. It was not long before another man was taken with a violent trembling and crying, so that my voice was almost drowned. I was forced to stop. I then prayed for him, and he became more quiet. I went on with my sermon. There was great weeping in every part of the house. It appeared as if the whole neighbourhood was about to turn to God. I hope the fruit of this meeting will be seen after many days, and that the work of the Lord will revive from this time." Such manifestations of spiritual influence were common in the earlier periods of Methodism. Nor have they yet entirely ceased to bless the ministry of God's chosen servants. May we not expect even greater signs and wonders as "the time of the end" comes on?

For such scenes of religious fervour, however formalism and

ungodliness may denounce or ridicule them, Mr. Lee had strong feelings of Christian sympathy. The gospel he believed and preached, authorized him to preach that men should repent; and he knew repentance must have some mode of manifestation, corresponding, in some measure at least, with the sense of sin and danger wrought in the soul by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. And it was not for him to prescribe the way of the Spirit, or dictate the manner of its developements in a soul burdened with conscious guilt, and filled with dread of Him who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell for ever. He could see good reason for strong crying and tears in such a case. And he could well appreciate the pious feelings that found pleasure in such scenes of spiritual distress. As a house of mourning, it was greatly preferable to a house of feasting. But he had no affinity for scenes of gaiety and revelry; nor could he perceive how a Christian could engage in them. Full of the subdued and hallowing feelings inspired by the revival scene just described, he returned on his path to another portion of his district. Reaching Saco after nightfall, he stopped at a tavern, gathered the family of his host together, and prayed with them, and went out to spend an hour of Christian conversation with a Baptist female whose acquaintance he had made on a previous visit. To his utter surprise, he found, on reaching the house, that she had gone to a dancing-party, and was not yet returned! He returned in sorrow to his room; and, after recording the fact in his Journal, very gravely remarks: "John the Baptist lost his head by reason of dancing, and I thought the Baptists had never been fond of dancing from that day to this!" Here he closed his labours for the year 1794.

Full of zeal and buoyant with hope he entered upon the duties of a new year, and during its first month was engaged in visiting various places in New Hampshire. He found much to encourage his efforts to do good, although there were many hindrances. In Portsmouth he preached several days in succession; and found the people so teachable, and so glad to hear the way to heaven, that he encouraged them to purchase an unfinished house, and convert it into a Church. While on this tour, he had the satisfaction of preaching in several places not previously visited by a Methodist Preacher. Among other places, he mentions Tiverton

and New Bedford, as having been thus visited for the first time. In both he preached to congregations whose solemn attention to the word induced him to regard his visit as not in vain in the Lord. From the last-named place he started in the packet to Nantucket Island; but owing to the severity of the weather, he had to put in at Martha's Vineyard. He spent a week on the island, preaching, and visiting from house to house. There was a missionary, "Old Mr. Zaccheus Mayhew," to the Indians residing on the island, with whom he had an interview full of interest and delight. He speaks of the missionary as a venerable man, far advanced in the journey of life, and joyfully anticipating the time of his departure, as a release from the servitude of sublunary toil and care. Mr. Lee had the privilege of spending a Sabbath with the Indian congregation. He also mentions another minister, whose name he does not give,—but whose religious opinions, in one element at least, were so novel as to surprise, if they did not frighten him. With respect to the state of the dead, he denied the separate existence of the soul, and affirmed its unconsciousness during the whole period from death to the resurrection from the dead. This was a strange doctrine to Mr. Lee, especially as it was held by one whose duty it was to search the Scriptures, and whose vocation it was to explain them in the hearing of the people. Viewing this subject as he did, and regarding the soul as immortal, and always conscious, it is not surprising that on hearing these strange opinions he exclaimed, "Good Lord, deliver *me* from evil." He was in immediate proximity with evil. Error is evil; and doctrinal error is a deadly evil. He feared to listen to errors that might deceive his faith in being present with the Lord when absent from the body; and the adoption of which might neutralize or destroy some of the strongest incentives to "the patience of hope and the labour of love." He remained on the island seven days, in which time he preached twelve sermons: sowing the good seed of the kingdom, and hoping for a harvest that should be to the praise and glory of God. In returning to New Bedford, he experienced difficulties that opened the way for him to preach in places that did not fall into his plan while on the island.

In Bridgewater, a few days after his return from the Vineyard, he received one of those assurances of the Divine blessing upon his

labours that always bring a train of spiritual comforts to a minister's heart. After he had closed a meeting at a private house, a Preacher who was present, and had assisted in the service, gave him the following relation of his personal experience. He had once made a profession of religion, but had turned aside from the holy commandment delivered unto him, and made shipwreck of faith. In this unhappy condition he went to hear Mr. Lee preach, having never previously heard a Methodist. The word was made quick and powerful, and sharper than a two edged-sword. He was cut to the heart, and his heart was opened. He was brought again to the ark of safety, and found rest to his soul. And like Peter, being converted, he desired to strengthen his brethren. He was now in the ministry—preaching peace to the wandering and weary by Jesus Christ. This account filled Mr. Lee with humility and joy; and constrained him to say: "O, that it was with me as in days past, when the Lord owned my labours in the conversion of many! But if there were not another soul brought to know God by my ministry, I should still have cause to bless God that ever I preached the gospel." The more than ordinary success of former years was a solace in the midst of the seeming barrenness of his present efforts to build the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men.

There are jubilee periods in every man's history. Christians have their personal holy-days—the day of their birth, and of their conversion, become a kind of sacred day—full of holy recollections and pious resolutions. They are set apart for the holy worship of the heart. The consecration of these periods to devout employments, was common to Mr. Lee. Accordingly we find the following record of his feelings on the return of his birth-day. "My birth-day—thirty-seven years old. I have made a profession of religion about twenty-two years. But when I look back upon my life, I have great cause to mourn before God that I am not more given up to His service. I have been generally healthy; and for many years I have been for the most part happy. Some things in my life I would gladly recall if it were in my power. Lord forgive my follies past. I wish to give myself more to God than ever. I have reason to hope I have gained some strength in religion the past year." Thus, while he mourned the imperfections of his life, he cherished a grateful sense of mercy and grace, and rejoiced in humble hope of eternal redemption. But his

birth-day was characterized by an incident that stirred up the doctrinal reverence of Mr. Lee. On the afternoon of the day, he attended a religious meeting, consisting, among other things, of a lecture to the singers, in which Mr. Cazier lectured on Ps. lxvi. 2 : *Sing forth the honour of his name : make his praise glorious.* "He preached without notes," says Mr. Lee, "and I think was as barefaced an Antinomian as I ever heard. He said no man ever yet sang forth the praises of God aright, but was as willing for God to damn him as to save him. Speaking of the Psalmist's saying he would sing of mercy and judgment, he said he would praise God as much for sending men to hell, as for taking them to heaven : i. e., 'I will bless God for saving one man, and damning another.' He further declared that every action of man was just as God would have it to be, and whether it appeared in our view to be a good or a bad action, it was intended of God for the general good, and the moral system would be broken if the action were not to take place," &c. This horrid doctrine was too much for the zealous Arminian. Methodism had a foothold in the place, and its earnest propagator could not, or would not hold his peace in the presence of such vaulting heresy. Accordingly, at night he preached a counter doctrine from Rom. ix. 22. He endeavoured to convince his hearers of the unreasonableness of predestination, and to show how the people had fitted themselves for destruction, and yet that God had much long-suffering for sinners. He brought the whole matter home to the conscience, by presenting the strange contradiction of predestination to the true character and calling of the Christian ministry. He took the clear ground of its institution for the good of men, and presented it as their first duty to stand in the place of Christ, beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, to warn them of their danger as sinners, and to convince them out of the Scriptures that God was not willing that they should be damned, but that they should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. And he also presented the palpable outrage upon the calling of the ministry, to teach men that it was the decree of God to damn them, and that they should bless him for it ! This was a point-blank shot into the very centre of the doctrinal impiety of foredooming the sinner to wrath by arbitrary and eternal decrees, and then sending the ministry to rescue

him from predestinated destruction. Mr. Cazier was present during the delivery of this discourse. At its close he approached Mr. Lee, and the people crowded around them in expectation of a personal controversy. They however were disappointed. A brief but civil interview occurred, and they separated, perhaps mutually surprised at each other.

At the close of the month of March, after a tour among the circuits in Massachusetts, Mr. Lee entered upon another tour in Maine. It is impossible to give a detailed account of the incidents of this journey. A mere outline of some of its more important characteristics must suffice. He preached in nearly all the places comprehended in his former visits; and was exposed to similar hardships and trials. It may be mentioned as an instance of his persevering ardour, that on reaching the Penobscot and finding no ferry, he procured two small boats, and lashing them together, his horse stood with his fore-feet in one and his hind-feet in the other, and so with himself, and without accident, was ferried across the river. "Swimming rivers, passing dangerous fords, encountering hills, rocks, and mire, were every-day occurrences." Penetrating as far as the Passamaquoddy, he determined to visit the British Provinces. "He accordingly visited Moose and Dudley Islands; and then passed into St. Andrews in New Brunswick. In all these places he found the people destitute of preaching. He next proceeded to St. John's, and in crossing a part of the Bay of Fundy, the vessel was driven against the rocks by the rapid tide, which created some alarm, but fortunately they escaped without injury. The next day they put into a place called Dipper Harbour. Here he continued two days, preaching at the house of a Mr. French, who, although the proprietor of three thousand acres of land, could not afford a chair for his guests to sit upon. On reaching St. John's, he was agreeably surprised to find an old friend, the Rev. Wm. Jessop, now engaged in preaching Christ crucified to the people. Seven days were spent here, preaching, holding prayer-meetings, meeting classes, and visiting the sick, and others, who needed his counsel or sought his company. He essayed to visit St. Stephen's, but being becalmed at a place on the Schoodic River, called Devil's Head, he was compelled to relinquish his design. He, however, went on shore, visited a family, and used the opportunity of giving them a private lecture

upon the great duty of personal religion. Beyond this point there lived a gentleman with whom he had been in the habit of corresponding for several years, whose house he was very anxious to reach. He left the vessel, in a row-boat that was ascending the river, and arrived at the house of his friend Mr. M'Call, near midnight. The family rose to receive him, and gave him a truly welcome reception. He was now at the dividing line between the United States and the British Provinces, and he had the opportunity of preaching on both sides of the line. An instance of the power of God in preventing evil to an humble Christian is mentioned by Mr. Lee, and it affords a beautiful illustration of the Divine promise: "They that trust in Me shall never be confounded." A female, the first who made a profession of conversion to God in the place, was much opposed by her irreligious husband. Her piety provoked him; her prayers were an offence to him; her scrupulous observance of religious duties, he could not away with. He measured his hostility by her devotedness, and as that increased more and more, he resolved, as he could not cure her, he would abandon her. Full of his purpose, he was on the point of leaving her, when in the act of starting, she begged they might pray together once more before their final separation. He consented; they knelt before God; and while she was imploring the Divine compassion and interposition in the hour of distress, his heart melted within him, his nature was softened, his hostility departed, and his purpose of separation with it; he relaxed his opposition to religion, and soon became a follower of the way he had so bitterly despised and rejected.

On his return from New Brunswick, Mr. Lee dedicated the new house of worship in Readfield. This was the first Church erected by the Methodists in Maine. It was an occasion of sincere rejoicing to the small Society to have a house of their own set apart to sacred uses, where, unfettered, and independent of others, they could worship, in the freedom of their own impressive forms, and in the full exercise of their peculiar and edifying prudential regulations, the God of their salvation. The house was commenced in the fall of 1794, and consecrated to Divine worship on the 21st of June, 1795.

The Conference for the New England States was held in New London, on the 15th of July, 1795. About twenty ministers, with the indefatigable Bishop Asbury at their head, were present.

Everything passed off pleasantly. Some little difficulty was experienced in adjusting the matter of Baptism ; many of the people, it seems, were scrupulous with regard to the mode of administering the Sacrament. We are satisfied the Conference did not compromise the principles of Methodism upon the subject, and yet the matter was settled to the satisfaction of all parties. Two Wesleyan Methodist ministers from the West Indies were present during the session. They came to recruit their health ; and being strangers and in need, the Conference cheerfully and liberally contributed out of their own poverty to the necessities of their strange and afflicted brethren. It is a blessed thing to a Christian man to receive Christian sympathy and assistance, but "it is more blessed to give than to receive." In such a case both parties are blessed ! In the appointments Mr. Lee was continued on the district, only it was made considerably larger than it was previously. It now had seventeen circuits and stations, and twenty-six Preachers. He was compelled to give all diligence to meet the demands of the Church upon his time and talents. After the adjournment of the body, he accompanied Bishop Asbury, in a tour of several weeks, through parts of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, travelling and preaching daily, and striving as good soldiers of Jesus Christ to establish the increasing number of believers in the power of living faith, and the purity of perfect love. Early in August they separated—the one to traverse the circuit of the Union as the chief pastor of a widely scattered and constantly augmenting body of Christians ; the other, as an under shepherd, to feed the flock of Christ, to build up the temple of God in the souls of men, and to fill up the old wastes, the desolation of former generations, with the beauty of holiness, the incense of a pure offering from hearts filled with love, and inflamed with a new-born zeal for God.

Boston was the first field of his labour for the year. It was five years since he commenced his efforts to lay a foundation for Methodism in the city. In pain and weariness, through evil report and good report, and with a fidelity that no obstacles could intimidate, he had persevered until now at length he was permitted to see some fruit of all his toils and pains. Early convinced that the chief difficulty to his success was to be traced to the want of a suitable place for regular worship, and, after extreme embarrass-



ment, having secured a *room*, he still coveted a house,—that goal of his hopes was now near its accomplishment. An eligible site had been obtained, the necessary funds for commencing the house had been secured, and on the 28th of August, he had the inexpressible satisfaction of assisting, with all due solemnities, in laying the corner-stone of the building. Here were two important objects gained—a Society of believers, and a home for them. It was a bright and joyous day for Methodism in Boston; and he who had laboured with so earnest and self-denying a zeal for its accomplishment, was full of high hopes and brilliant visions. But the people must be prepared to crowd the courts of this house of the Lord, when its doors should be thrown open for their reception. “The hired room,” scarce capable of holding a hundred persons, was too small for his aspirations; his mind was “cribbed, cabined, and confined” in its narrow dimensions. He could not let the fire of his zeal burn in him until their beautiful house should be finished. He must breathe again the free air of the Common, and lift his voice in the midst of its crowding multitudes. Some of his brethren, perhaps, feeling their independence since they had a *room*, or deeming it now unnecessary, or a condescension, urged many objections to such a measure. They had forgotten “the hole of the pit out of which they were digged;” or were probably ashamed of so public a reminiscence of their origin. But their scruples availed nothing with Mr. Lee. He aimed to do all the good in his power to the greatest number of people—this was his philosophy of religion. The probabilities of winning souls to Christ were greater in preaching to thousands than to handfuls, or a hundred. How could *he* hesitate? His heart was fixed upon it; and for three Sabbaths successively he took his stand under “the old elm tree,” and preached to thousands of listening and well-behaved people. Whether any were converted, it is now impossible to say. But he was gratified. The feeling that prompted the duty was satisfied, and happy; and he went his way rejoicing—buoyant with the consciousness of having “done what he could.”

The star of Methodism was in the ascendant in New England. But there were many adversaries. Not only did “lewd fellows of the baser sort” exalt themselves in opposition; but chief men, men of character and influence, the *rulers*, took counsel together

to break the bands, and cast away the cords that Methodism was binding around the hearts of the people. One striking example of this hostility is recorded by Mr. Lee. It occurred in Provincetown, Massachusetts, a few days after the laying of the corner-stone of the Church in Boston. There was a small Society in Provincetown, gathered out of the world after much labour and many tears. They were fruitful in all good works, and no man could lay aught to their charge. For their own comfortable worship, and for the benefit of others, they desired to build a house in which the pure Word of God might be preached, and where, as children of believing Abraham, they might offer praise and prayer to the God of Salvation. They not only desired a Church, but resolved to build one. For this purpose, and after many sacrifices, they raised money, and purchased timber for their house. While thus quietly proceeding with their arrangements, to their utter surprise a Town Meeting was called, and, after grave deliberation, it was resolved that the Methodists should have no house of worship in the place. To this arbitrary measure of mob-authority the Society resolved to give no heed. They collected their materials, and proceeded with their work. It was nearly ready for framing, when those who regarded Methodism as an evil and bitter thing, resolved to achieve by force what they could not effect by intimidation. Accordingly, under cover of night, fit hour for a deed of darkness, a company of evil-workers dragged the timbers into a neighbouring valley, and after marring the workmanship, collected them into a pile, and placed an effigy of a Methodist tarred and feathered on the top. This famous deed accomplished, they left the spot, and waited for the morning to witness the surprise and sorrow of a few pious people thus despoiled of their property, outraged in their rights, and insulted in their feelings. It was the triumph of wickedness: the upsetting, it may be, of the cup of wrath in the conscience of some of the perpetrators of a deed of infamy and guilt. This persecution for righteousness sake was borne with the meekness of Christian forbearance and resignation. It was a sad loss to the feeble Society, but their trust was in God; and they renewed their efforts, resolved to oppose the malignity of unreasonable and wicked men, by the patience and gentleness of Christ. The morning after this shameful occurrence, Mr. Lee visited the scene of

disaster, and surveyed the melancholy wreck of a thousand brilliant hopes. But he was calm and collected. His heart was sorrowful, but it gave forth no gall—no, not a drop. He spoke, but not in reproach and wrath. “I went to see it,” he says, “and felt astonished at the conduct of the people, considering we live in a free country; and no such conduct can be justified. However, I expect this will be for the good of the little Society, and that they will find the truth of these words: ‘The wrath of man shall praise thee.’” And is it not so? There is still a Society of Methodists in Provincetown. And if its history could be written, might it not be found to have been a lifelong consolation to some of the men engaged in this work of sacrilege, and to have blessed the dying hour of others? At least, the Society still lives and flourishes in its representatives; but where are those who, in an evil hour, trespassed upon its rights, and sought, in the destruction of its house of worship, to crush and extinguish it for ever? They are forgotten in the grave—they are in the midst of the retributions of eternity!

We cannot follow Mr. Lee through the routine of his daily duties, while employed in the superintendence of his district, especially as we have already traversed it several times in his company, and under his guidance. A few incidents, serving to illustrate his character, and the obstacles that everywhere opposed his efforts to spread the gospel, must suffice for this period of his history.

On one of his ordinary visits to New Milford, he preached on the doctrine of human responsibility, from the words, “*Who will render to every man according to his works.*” Rom. ii. 6. After preaching, a young minister, it is presumed of the Standing Order, and a candidate for the vacant parish, objected to his having persuaded all to choose religion and seek God, and for inviting all to Christ. He listened patiently to the objection; and, turning upon the young Calvinist, asked him, “Do you not believe that God has decreed that some men should not be saved?” “Certainly, I do.” “Do you not believe Christ opened a way by his death, whereby all might possibly be saved?” This was also answered in the affirmative. “Well, then, according to your doctrine, has not Christ opened a way whereby God’s decrees might be broken? Will you explain this contradiction to me?” He tried to escape the dilemma, and repeated the effort; but it was fruitless. Involved

in inextricable confusion, he gave up the matter, and left the obstinate Arminian intrenched and invincible, behind the strong ramparts of free grace, freely offered to all!

At a place called Mount Desert, he experienced a chapter of incidents. He went by water, in a canoe, and was accompanied by a physician. He found, on reaching the place, it was training-day; and there was a large collection of both sexes,—the women waiting for the termination of the muster, in order to join in the festivities of a dance. But when they learned his purpose to preach, they were sorely perplexed. Some said, We will have a dance; others said, Nay, but we will have a sermon. The *woman* of the house said, "If they would not hear the gospel, they should not dance." The *man* of the house cried out, "If the Lord has sent the man, let us hear him; but if the devil has sent him, let the devil take him away again." But the *Preacher* told them he would not preach in the house at all; and he left the house, to seek a place where he would be less likely to violate the prohibition of an improper use of pearls. But the chapter was not completed. On his way from this modern Babel, a man, calling himself a Christian and a Baptist, went with him. He was a strong fatalist, or, what amounts to the same thing, a Calvinist. He was brimful of religious talk, and soon discovered that Mr. Lee believed that Christ died for all men, and that all were called by God, and might come to Christ and be saved. This discovery put him in violent passion; he denounced it as *damnable doctrine*, and seemed ready to swear outright, and

"Prove his doctrine orthodox  
By apostolic blows and knocks."

This developement of Calvinistic Christianity filled Mr. Lee with commiseration for the deluded victim of "the high mystery of predestination." If the mystery has any foundation, or ever furnishes an illustration of its power—here was a specimen of predetermined wrath and folly! Poor man! he could not discern "what manner of spirit he was of," and yet he could talk of what God did "from all eternity!" Strange folly of man! There was yet another section in this day's chapter. According to appointment, Mr. Lee preached in the afternoon. His text was 1 Peter

ii. 9. He had a goodly company of hearers, among them his predestinarian companion of the morning; and he had no more sympathy for the sermon than he had for the conversation. This he indicated by shaking his head at every recurrence of an objectionable opinion. There was another predestinarian in the house, and the two nodded their dissent at each other with the pertinacious effrontery of Mesmeric pretension. As the Preacher proceeded, the influence seemed to increase, until their heads scarcely did anything else but shake. This was offensive to Mr. Lee, and presently it became annoying. It attracted the congregation; and, as they seemed by look and motion to say, "that's not true," "nor that," he thought it quite time to stop their motions. So, stopping in his discourse, and fixing his bright, burning eye upon the face of one of the malcontents, until every other eye followed and rested upon the same face, he drawled out in slowly measured tones—"I should be glad if you would try and keep your head still." It was enough. The head fell upon the breast, and remained stationary during the rest of the service.

If reason is the "column of true majesty in man," the will is the broad and firm foundation on which it rests. The subjugation of the will to the authority of God is the object of religion, and the proof of its power. A singular remark of an aged man, just brought under the government of grace, is mentioned by Mr. Lee. It was during a revival of religion in Falmouth, an old sinner was converted, and filled with the elements of a new spiritual life. Some one, perhaps thinking it a sign of approaching dissolution, and feeling an interest in the estate of the old convert, asked after his will. "I have none," was the reply. "What have you done with it?" "I lost it upon the ledge the other day,"—alluding to the place of his conversion, and to the fact that his own will was absorbed and lost in the will of God. In religion, *my* will is the essence of selfishness, rebellion, and disorder. "*Thy* will be done," is the substance of peace, holiness, and perfection.

After a year spent amidst toils and trials such as are here recorded, Mr. Lee repaired to the seat of the Conference, Thompson, Connecticut. About thirty ministers were present, some of them from the province of Maine. Seven Deacons and five Elders were ordained by Bishop Asbury. Beside this, except the remarks

"We talked together, and rejoiced in the Lord," and "were closely employed" during the two days of the session, we can find no record of its proceedings.

Another schism, small in its character, partial in its influence, and brief in its duration, is to be recorded as a part of the history of the times comprehended in this chapter. It occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, and was guided by the Rev. William Hammet. Devoid of elements of usefulness, and only powerful to do evil, it soon and happily lost the little influence derived from the acknowledged abilities of its author, and passed into oblivion. It never flourished, even in Charleston, and, beyond a few Societies in the state, it is not known to have extended. The causes operating to produce this schism, even upon the authority of Mr. Hammet himself, must be considered, if not utterly trivial, at least entirely insufficient to justify a rupture of his Church relations. At this distance of time, they seem not only unworthy of the Christian character of both the leader and his adherents, but might authorize now, as then, a very just suspicion of other and very different motives from those given to the public in his "Appeal to Truth and Circumstances, by William Hammet,"—a pamphlet issued from the Charleston press in 1792. A brief account of these "Circumstances" will satisfy the demands of history, and sustain the truth of our opinion of their real character. Mr. Hammet came to the United States from the West Indies, where he had spent four or five years in the ministry, under the general direction of Mr. Wealey, and the immediate superintendence of Dr. Coke. In company with Dr. Coke, he arrived in Charleston in February 1791. Too feeble to keep pace with Dr. Coke in his rapid travel through the country, he was left in Charleston, where he remained until May, preaching, and "visiting from house to house." His labours in this city gave so much satisfaction to the Society, that, on his departure for Philadelphia, to attend Conference, they sent an earnest petition for his return as their pastor. In Philadelphia, in an interview with Bishop Asbury, he determined to continue in America, and take an appointment in the regular plan. He was accordingly received, and returned to Charleston as the field of his ministry. On the adjournment of Conference, he obtained permission from the Bishop to visit New York and Baltimore. In the latter city, containing then, as

now, the largest and most influential Society of Methodists in the country, he spent some time; and entered into negotiations with some of the Society to become their pastor. This, and some other circumstances, superinduced a suspicion of his stability, in the mind of Bishop Asbury, and led him to alter the plan of the appointments so far as to continue the Rev. J. Parks, who had been appointed to Georgetown, South Carolina, in Charleston as the colleague of Mr. Hammet. This step was taken after the affair in Baltimore, and previous to the arrival of Mr. H. in Charleston. The measure, however, gave him great offence, although it still left him as chief pastor in charge of the Society. It was the proximate cause of his secession, if not solely the origin of it. He objected to the stay of Mr. Parks in the city, because of the expense it would bring upon the Society. This was a suggestion of his own—the Society seems to have felt no solicitude upon the subject. To carry his measure of removing his colleague, which seems to have been the real motive of his conduct, he stirred up excitement in private, and public to such an extent, that the Rev. R. Ellis, Presiding Elder of the District, admonished him of his improprieties, and notified him of his intention to submit the whole matter to the adjudication of the Conference. Upon this, he resolved to withdraw from the Church; and, in a letter to Mr. Ellis, under date of November 28, 1791, he resigned his pastorate, and withdrew from the fellowship of Methodism. He was now at liberty to make inroads upon the Church; and he was but too successful in building up a party in Charleston. And by the aid of a few ministers, who united with him, he may have established a very few Societies elsewhere. But the record of them, if any ever existed, is either lost or forgotten. Their memorial has perished among living things. By this untoward event, serious injury was done to Methodism in Charleston. Many of its attached and influential friends were estranged; and barren years succeeded these disasters of its early seed-time. Its effects may still linger around the grave of him whose later years so poorly recompensed the promise of his early labours, when, under due submission to just authority, he was “diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” After his secession, Mr. H., by his popularity and the influence of those who united with him, succeeded in erecting a commodious house

of worship and a parsonage; both of which, we believe, were settled upon himself. His Society did not long survive him; and, after his death, his property passed into the hands of the Methodists. It has since been destroyed by fire; but its name has been transmitted to the present edifice, and Trinity Church ranks as one of the most popular and influential of our Churches in Charleston. Such is a brief outline of an affair that had its origin in resistance to just authority; and whose entire history, apart from the evils it inflicted upon the cause of religion, might furnish a very appropriate illustration of the remark, that we often lose more by contending for our supposed rights, than we could possibly suffer by submission to a palpable wrong.

The second General Conference of the Church was held in Baltimore, on the 20th of October, 1796, and consisted of one hundred and twenty members, drawn together from the different portions of the itinerant field. The body was in session *fourteen* days; and from the amount of business done, the members must have been working-men. A brief general view of their proceedings is all our limits will admit of, apart from the personal history of Mr. Lee, and of his connexion with the stirring events of the occasion. One of the first and most important duties of the Conference was the revision of the Discipline. Methodism not only preached perfection to others, but sought to be perfect itself. Hence, much of the time of its quadrennial synods was devoted to the work of reviewing the operations of the system, correcting what experience discovered to be defective, consolidating its economy, and in concentrating its measures upon the great original object of its organization—the spread of holiness in the earth. We have given, in a preceding chapter, the grounds upon which, in 1792, they proceeded in moderating or strengthening their plans, according to the suggestions of experience, or the demands of necessity. For the same reasons, but with extreme caution, they entered upon the work of revision in 1796. In the prefatory address to the “Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, begun at Baltimore, on the 20th of October, 1796,” we find the following sentences, among others as just and pertinent. “We can truly say, that we have been fearful of making alterations. We have made none, which we do not believe to be highly necessary, or evidently useful.



We have also added, as briefly as may be, our principal reasons for every Minute. Our grand object is to raise and preserve a holy and united people. Holiness is our aim; and we pay no regard to numbers, but in proportion as they possess the genuine principles of vital religion." In the same connexion they vindicate their course from any suspicion or imputation of assuming authority, by referring to their former determinations on the subject of revision, and to the fact, in their own appropriate words, of the unquestioned right of the entire ministry to be present and object, if need be, by argument and vote, to any of the enactments of the body. "Our General Conference," they say, "is held once only in four years, and it is open to every Preacher in full connexion. Every such Preacher has therefore ample time to weigh every subject of importance, to consult upon it with all his friends, and to be present at the General Conference, to give his vote, as well as declare his sentiments at large: or he may deliver his thoughts, in confidence, to one or more of his brethren, who intend to be present." Acting under the influence of such principles, and in view of such checks upon their conduct, posterity must accord to them personal rectitude, and official integrity, whatever may be its verdict as to the character and tendency of their measures.

Heretofore the Conferences were confined to small districts of country, composed of a small number of ministers; and were assembled at the pleasure and convenience of the Bishops. This feature of the system was now remodelled, and settled upon a basis that still exists, and gives form and energy to our Ecclesiastical system. Six Conferences, independent of each other, with defined boundaries and limited powers, were established; with provision for a seventh, in the province of Maine, "if the Bishops see it necessary." These six original Conferences were New England, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Virginia, South Carolina, and "the Western Conference, for the states of Kentucky and Tennessee." To each of these Conferences was given jurisdiction over the Church within its bounds. The rule stands:—"Under the direction of which (Conference) shall be the affairs of our Church," &c. The "reasons" accompanying and justifying this regulation are not unimportant at the present day. After a mere reference to the previous plan of holding Conferences, they say: "This was attended

with many inconveniences.—1. There were but few of the senior Preachers whose years and experience had matured their judgments, who could be present at any one Conference. 2. The Conferences wanted that dignity which every religious synod should possess, and which always accompanies a *large* assembly of gospel ministers. 3. The itinerant plan was exceedingly cramped, from the difficulty of removing Preachers from one district to another. All these inconveniences will, we trust, be removed on the present plan, and at the same time the Conferences are so arranged that all the members respectively may attend with little difficulty. To all which may be added, that the active, zealous, unmarried Preachers may move on a larger scale, and preach the ever blessed gospel far more extensively through the sixteen states, and other parts of the continent; whilst the married Preachers, whose circumstances require them, in many instances, to be more located than the single men, will have a considerable field of action opened to them, and also the Bishops will be able to attend the Conferences with greater ease, and without injury to their health." These simple, but just and sufficient reasons, will commend themselves to unbiassed common sense in every age and phase of society.

The Deed of Settlement, for protecting the property of the Church, in nearly the precise language of the present form, was the enactment of this General Conference. "The reasons" given for this Minute are clear and forcible, and if they had been preserved in the Discipline as explanatory of the rule, much of the senseless clamour that vexed party spirit has vented against it, might have been prevented. At least, the strength and sufficiency of the reasons would have vindicated the law, and rebuked all opposition to it as unmerited and officious. In truth, however, no valid *moral* objections, and certainly no legal ones, can lie against the instrument, or the exclusive rights it secures in all Church property to the *members* and *ministers* of the Church. This deed creates a Board of Trustees, constitutes them the legal guardians of the Church property of each particular Society, and invests them with authority, under certain prescribed circumstances, to alienate the property so held in trust from its original design, by mortgage or sale. The real ownership of all such property is recognised by

the deed; as residing in the members of each particular Society. The ministry, in any grade of it known to Methodism, have no ownership in any such property. The original deed, after defining the objects of the trust to be "for the use of the *members* of the Methodist E. Church in the United States of America, according to the rules and discipline which from time to time may be agreed upon," &c.; says: "And in further trust and confidence that they (the Trustees) shall, at all times, for ever hereafter, *permit* such Ministers and Preachers belonging to the said Church as shall from time to time be duly authorized" by the General and Yearly Conferences, "*and none others*,"\* to preach and expound God's holy word therein." Such are the principles of a deed of settlement which has been strangely affirmed to vest all the rights of property in our Church buildings, parsonages, &c., in the Bishops and Ministers of the Church. No affirmation can scarcely be less true, or more absurd. The unity of Methodism under the pastoral supervision of an itinerant ministry, was always a favourite doctrine and fixed purpose of our fathers. And the preservation of the general unity of an indefinite, but great and constantly increasing number of particular Societies, demanded just such a regulation with respect to property, as was provided for in the deed. Congruously with such objects, a different mode of adjustment would have been imperfect and repulsive. This was the argument of the Conference in the adoption of the law. "The preservation of our union, and the progress of the Word of God, indispensably require that the free and full use of the pulpits should be in the hands of the General Conference, and the Yearly Conferences authorized by them. Of course, the Travelling Preachers who are in full connexion assembled in their Conferences, are the patrons of the pulpits of our churches. And this was absolutely necessary to give a clear, legal specification in the deed." It was to perfect a legal title to the property, and secure it to its original objects, that this feature of the deed was

\* *And none others.* These words have been since omitted. But, as used by the Conference, they were not intended to be so exclusive as they seem to signify. It seems the Conference were of opinion that a particular specification of the ministry to occupy the pulpits was essential to the legal perfection of the instrument; and therefore they defined the ministry as itinerant, not local, and Methodist, to the exclusion of all others.

adopted. This is obvious from the additional *reason* given for the enactment. In immediate conjunction with the language just quoted, we find the following words: "If the Local Preachers, Stewards, and Leaders (who have an undoubted right to preach, meet their classes, &c., in the preaching-houses at due time, according to the form of discipline) were specified, it would be necessary to add a description of their orders; which would throw such obscurity upon the whole, that a court of justice would either reject the deed, or be at a loss to determine concerning the little peculiarities of our form of discipline." They also disavow all "design of limiting in the least degree the privileges of any of the public officers of 'the Church;' but solely intend to preserve the property of our Church by such a clear simple specification, as shall be fully and easily cognizable by the laws." Did they err in thus securing to their own use property sacredly committed to them for holy purposes? Exclusive right to use the pulpits erected for them, is all that the Conference claimed, or the deed conceded. To object, therefore, to this feature of our economy, is to complain that our Churches are not made free, or that exceptions are not incorporated in our deeds in favour of the equal rights of every religious denomination, of whatever doctrinal creed, or standard of morals.

An evil of great magnitude in every period of American Methodism, has been the retirement of her ministers from the itinerant pastoral work. Various causes have led to this partial abandonment of ministerial duty; and many schemes have been devised for its prevention. One, that promised much, and has outlived every other, without effecting what it was hoped it would accomplish, originated with this General Conference. The insufficiency of the provision for the support of ministers, especially those with families, has been one of the principal causes of this evil. To remedy this, it was resolved to create a Connectional fund, by contributions from the ministry and membership of the Church, to be committed to a Board of Trustees for investment, the produce of which was to be divided equally among the Annual Conferences, and by them to be again distributed to the most necessitous of their members. This measure was matured during the Conference, and was soon afterwards incorporated by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, under the style and title of "The Trustees of the fund

for the relief and support of the itinerant, superannuated, and worn-out Ministers and Preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church (in the United States of America), their wives and children, widows and orphans." There was in previous existence a "Preacher's Fund," the stock of which was ordered to "be thrown into the Chartered Fund." "The produce of the sale of books" was also to swell this fund; and a most urgent call was made on their "benevolent friends to promote this great charity." By special enactment of the Conference, *single* claimants upon this fund could receive only sixty-four dollars per annum; *married* persons, only one hundred and twenty-eight dollars; and *children*, only sixteen dollars each; and no money was to be drawn from the fund "until the first day of August, 1798.\* Such was the origin and objects of what is still known among us as "The Chartered Fund." The exact amount raised and funded under this measure of the Conference, we have taken no pains to ascertain. We only know it never met the expectation of its founders, nor answered, to any extent, the benevolent objects of its creation. Dr. Bangs† very justly says: "Though the creation of the Chartered Fund originated from the purest motives, and has been kept up and superintended by some of the most benevolent spirits of the Church, yet it has never been able to pay more than from ninety to one hundred dollars a year to each Annual Conference; and as this small amount would not, when divided among the several claimants, give to each but about two dollars a year, it may be questioned whether, by inducing a false dependence in the public mind, this fund has not defeated the objects of its institution, and disappointed the expectations of its benevolent founders and patrons." The wisest measures of the best of men do not always succeed. A more unselfish attempt to promote an important religious interest, can scarcely be contemplated; and yet the elements of discomfiture were in the seeds of the measure. Its first and most fatal principle was a virtual repudiation of the doctrine of inspiration,—“They that preach the gospel, must live of the gospel;” and, if successful, it would have made the ministry

\* For a full account of the proceedings in this measure, see Lee's Hist. Methodists, pp. 235-244. Also "Minutes of the General Conference of 1796."

† Hist. M. E. Church, vol. ii. pp. 50-51.

independent of the people—an evil that, if it had not soon destroyed us, would have cursed us through all the generations of our existence, and to the remotest point of our influence. It may have done a little good in some cases of distress; but it may also have prevented a great deal more from being done: for the sake of its pious origin, it may not have been entirely rejected as an agent for good; but its general failure of securing its avowed object, may be justly regarded as a blessed interposition of God in behalf of Methodism.

Previous to the Conference whose history we are reviewing, few and very faint lines of distinction existed between Local Preachers and the laity of the Church. The authority to preach seems to have comprehended no Ecclesiastical rights. They were ineligible to ministerial orders; and if accused of immorality were to be tried by the laity. But a new line of policy was now adopted in elevating the office to ministerial rank, and conferring certain defined rights and privileges upon it. A rule was introduced into the Discipline securing the right of ordination as a Deacon after a probation of four years, on condition of presenting to the Bishop “a testimonial from the Society to which they belong, and from the Stewards of the circuit, signed also by three Elders, three Deacons, and three Travelling Preachers.” The rule upon this subject, as it stands in the Discipline of 1796, presents a singular specimen of Ecclesiastical legislation. It is appended to “Section iv., 1st Chapter: “Of the Election and Consecration of Bishops, and of their Duty,” in these words: “N. B. The Bishop *has obtained liberty*, by the suffrages of the Conference, to ordain Local Preachers to the office of Deacons, provided they obtain a testimonial,” &c., as quoted above.\* The law, nearly as it now exists, respecting the trial of Local Preachers, was also changed, and made to conform to their new and improved circumstances and relations—a trial by their peers, and the right of appeal to the Yearly Conference. Provision was also made to compensate them for services rendered to the Church in supplying the place of a Travelling Preacher, and also under certain circumstances of necessity and distress, to give them relief. We can find nothing in the legislation of the Church

\* See Discipline, 1796; Minutes of the General Conference; and Lee's History, pp. 244-247.

respecting their graduation to Elders' orders. Elders who had travelled, retained their orders on locating. But it is presumable this grade of the ministry was withheld from those who had not entered the Travelling Connection. If we are right in this conjecture, we are utterly at a loss as to the grounds on which it was rested; and, in the absence of their reasons, it would be uncharitable to condemn them.

We return to the personal history of Mr. Lee, especially as it is connected with one, and not the least important, of the measures of the General Conference of 1796. What part he acted in the business just reviewed, cannot be certainly determined. One of his contemporaries,\* and a member of this Conference, speaking of him with reference to its proceedings, says, "I had the privilege of sitting with Brother Lee, in three General Conferences where business to a considerable amount was transacted. I considered him a very useful member of the General Conference; and always among the foremost in discussing and leading on the most difficult business." In one of the difficult and delicate matters requiring the attention of the Conference, Mr. Lee acted a most decided and distinguished part. Hitherto, Mr. Asbury, with very partial assistance from Dr. Coke, had borne the whole burden of Episcopal duty. He had been for some time desirous of dividing this burden; and now the magnitude of the work, the frequent and long European visits of Dr. Coke, and his own failing health, made it necessary to appoint some one to "this office and ministry in the Church." A resolution to strengthen the Episcopacy was accordingly introduced. At its commencement, or pending its discussion, Mr. Asbury rose, and stated to the Conference the fears that agitated his mind on the occasion, and the reasons for them. He feared an imprudent selection; and expressed the hope that the choice might fall on some one who was well established in the doctrines and discipline of Methodism. "This threw a damper on all present, and seemed to paralyze the whole business." The resolution was then modified so as to read thus: "to strengthen the Episcopacy in a way which should be agreeable to Mr. Asbury." "It was then almost unanimously agreed to, and requested of Mr. Asbury to

\* Rev. John Kobler, in a letter to the author, dated Fredericksburg, Va., June 2d, 1843.

make the selection himself, which he appeared very backward and unwilling to do." At this juncture of the affair a new and greater difficulty was started. Dr. Coke, who was present, and occupied the chair, requested the suspension of action upon the subject until the afternoon session. When the body assembled again, "Dr. Coke offered himself wholly to the Conference, promising to serve them in the best manner he could, and to be entirely at the disposal of his American brethren, and to live or die among them." This brought the whole subject under discussion, and elicited a protracted and earnest debate. We are chiefly concerned with the ground occupied by Mr. Lee. He opposed the entire procedure, except the naked resolution to strengthen the Episcopacy. The proposition to submit the matter to the choice of Bishop Asbury, in either of its modifications, was, in the judgment of Mr. Lee, a departure from the law of the Church governing "the election of Bishops." The General Conference of 1784 had settled this question; and he was too strenuous an advocate for the integrity of the Discipline, in its letter and spirit, to sit silently by and witness its violation. Besides, there was another grave matter involved, which, unseen by others, his far-reaching vision comprehended, and his stern devotion to principle compelled him to arrest. The proposition invaded the *rights* of the Conference, and might hereafter be plead as a precedent for the usurpation of power. Perceiving the bearings of this measure, he opposed it with all his might, as involving a present wrong, and promising a future evil. If respect for, and confidence in, Bishop Asbury, had been the simple or sole question at issue, his tongue had obeyed the behest of his heart and been still. But interests were at stake that friendship, however devoted, might not interfere with; and his honest independence could not hesitate between a question of love for the Bishop, and duty to the Church. Nor was he a whit more favourable to the offer of Dr. Coke. He stretched the full strength of his broad and massive intellect in opposition to it; and might have defeated it, but for the (in behalf of Dr. Coke) generous interposition of Bishop Asbury. The letter of Mr. Kobler, just now referred to, contains so accurate and comprehensive an account of this affair, that in justice to Mr. Lee, and for the truth of history, it is here copied



entire. It is the only full and satisfactory account we have ever seen. Of the offer of Dr. Coke, Mr. Kobler says :

“ This unexpected offer, and to many an unwelcome one, opened the way to a large and spirited debate. A number present were warmly in favour of accepting the offer, and as many were against it. Mr. Lee was decidedly against, and he warmly opposed it. In fact, I believe he never liked the Doctor any way, from his first entering among us in 1784, to the last. He could not endure the absolute spirit, and overbearing disposition of Dr. Coke, as a high officer in the Church. Mr. Lee was a candid man, and in no wise disposed to give flattering titles to any, and as such he opposed the offer with great zeal and eloquence from first to last. He was a man of great penetration, could see through circumstances, and read men well. He was the best speaker in the Conference. He first showed that there were several members in our Connection who were well qualified to fill the office, having been long and well proved ; who were natives of the country, one of ourselves, and were well acquainted with the rules by which our civil and religious privileges were regulated. But his most powerful argument, I well remember, was this : ‘ that the Doctor was a thorough-bred Englishman ; and an entire stranger abroad in the country ; (*out* of the Church ; ) that the deep-rooted prejudices against British oppression, which by our arduous Revolutionary struggle we had so recently thrown off, still hung heavily, and was operating powerfully upon the public mind ; and that to select a high officer to govern our Church from that distant and tyrannizing nation, whose spirit and practice were held in abhorrence by the American people, would in his judgment be a very impolitic step, and would tend to raise the suspicions and prejudices of the public against us as a Church. He further said, he had frequently heard the same objections made against us as an American Church for having a native of England (Bishop Asbury) at our head ; and now to add another, who, in many respects, had not the experience, prudence, nor skill in government that Bishop A. had, would operate very materially against the best interests of the Church.’ ”

“ The debate lasted two days, and was incessant ; and during the time the Doctor was secluded from the Conference room. Mr. Lee and his party evidently had the better of the cause in debate,

and were gaining confidence continually. In one of his speeches, Mr. Lee said he was 'confident the Doctor would not fill the high office, and perform the vast amount of labour attached to it; that England was his home, his friends and best interests were there, and without doubt he would spend most of his time in going to and fro between England and America, and leave the Episcopacy and the Connection as void of help as they were before.' When Bishop Asbury saw how the matter was likely to go, he rose from the chair, and with much apparent feeling said: 'If we reject him it will be his ruin, for the British Conference will certainly know of it, and it will sink him vastly in their estimation.' Here the debate ended. I well remember during the debate, the Doctor came into Conference and made a speech. Among other things, he said, 'he never was cast upon such a sea of uncertainty before.' This, I expect, made Bishop Asbury say, '*If we reject him, it will be his ruin.*' The discussion was now stopped, and the whole matter submitted (though by many with reluctance) to Bishop Asbury's judgment—for they had, previously to the Doctor's offer, urged him to make his own selection. I have often wondered at Bishop Asbury's implicit confidence in Dr. Coke. Whether he felt himself bound, in conscience, to submit to one who ordained him to the office of Superintendent, or whether it was because he was Mr. Wesley's representative, I am at a loss to say. But the Doctor's conduct, in a short time, fully proved that Mr. Lee's opinions of his course were founded in a wise discrimination of character—for in a few months he went to England, and never appeared among us till four years afterwards!"

In the commencement of this effort to strengthen the Episcopacy, a committee was raised to whom the subject was referred; but objections were urged against it, and it was dissolved. It is believed that it was in reference to the measures proposed in this committee, that the terms "ensnared" and "deception" are used in the following letter, addressed by Mr. Lee, under date of "April 29, 1797," to one of his early co-labourers in New England, the Rev. Daniel Smith, and yet preserved as a kind of sacred relic among his descendants. It has been placed in our hands, and from it we extract the subjoined sentences upon the point under consideration.

"I have not heard from Brother Asbury for a long time. He

liked to have ensnared us last Conference with another English Bishop. Thank Providence, I discovered the deception, and over-set the plan. I call that my work. I still say, no more English Bishops. I had rather lose one, than make one. I wish for an American Superintendent equal in power with Brother Asbury. If I live, perhaps I shall say so at the next General Conference.”\*

In a historical notice of this affair, Mr. Lee† says : “ The Conference at length agreed to the Doctor’s proposal, and concluded that if the Doctor tarried with us we could do with two Bishops, without ordaining a third, and the former vote for choosing another Bishop was dropped.”

The instrument drawn up and signed by Doctor Coke possesses considerable historical importance ; but the *terms* in which it was expressed will illustrate a remark in Mr. Lee’s letter, respecting the “ equal powers” of the Bishops, as well as justify his general doctrine as to the rights and powers of the office. It is in these words :

“ I offer myself to my American brethren entirely to their service, all I am and have, with my talents and labours in every respect ; without any mental reservation whatsoever, to labour among them, and to assist Bishop Asbury ; *not to station the Preachers at any time when he is present*, but to exercise all Episcopal duties, when I hold a Conference in his absence, *and by his consent*, and to visit the West Indies and France, when there is an opening, and I can be spared.”

“ Signed,

THOMAS COKE.

“ CONFERENCE ROOM, BALTIMORE, October 27, 1796.”

\* It is presumable the term “ *another English Bishop*” had an exclusive reference to Mr. Whatcoat, who, having been on a former occasion recommended for the Episcopacy by Mr. Wesley, was now sought, in the Committee, to be placed in that responsible office, although the Conference had once refused to elevate him to it. And it is quite certain the desire to “ *lose one English Bishop*” is to be restricted exclusively to Dr. Coke. There is nothing in this letter that conflicts with its author’s long, matured, and pure-hearted friendship for his “ Brother Asbury.” If the Conference had like to have been “ *ensnared*,” the Bishop might have said, and Mr. Lee would have endorsed it,—“ in the innocence of my hands, and the integrity of my heart, have I done this.”

† Hist. Methodists, p. 248.

There is one other fact bearing upon this matter, that we desire to submit to the reader before passing away from the subject. We have high authority to sustain the views so strongly urged by Mr. Lee in his opposition to the reception of Dr. Coke as a Superintendent. Whether the conjectures of Mr. Kobler respecting the grounds of Bishop Asbury's preference of Dr. Coke be correct or not, one thing is clear, that ultimately, and at no very distant day, he gave in his adhesion to the doctrines of complete independence of British Methodists, and of an American Episcopacy. In his Journal, vol. ii. pp. 292-293, under date of Sept. 23, 1797, we find the following entry :

"I received a letter from Dr. Coke ; as I thought, so it is—he is gone from Ireland to England, and will have work enough when he cometh there. . . . . It is a doubt if the Doctor cometh to America until spring, if at all until the General Conference. I am more than ever convinced of the propriety of the attempts I have made to bring forward Episcopal men :\* first, from the uncertain state of my health ; secondly, from a regard to the union and good order of the American body, and the state of the European Connection. *I am sensibly assured the Americans ought to act as if they expected to lose me every day, and had no dependence upon Dr. Coke ; taking prudent care not to place themselves at all under the controlling influence of British Methodists.*"

In the scenes through which we have just passed with Mr. Lee, it will be perceived that his strong attachment to the discipline of the Church was only equalled, not surpassed by his singular devotion to Conference rights. For both of them, in their integrity, he contended in many a hard-fought battle, and we shall yet see him in the strife of debate, defending these important breastworks of our Ecclesiastical polity. In the pursuit of truth and duty, whether in the humble homestead of the frontier emigrant, or on the floor of the General Conference, he feared no presence, and dreaded no consequences. The only smile he courted was God's light upon his heart. He felt himself free, and forced others to confess him—

\* One of these men, as we shall see in the next chapter, was the Rev. Jesse Lee

a man. His contemporary, to whose letter reference has been twice made, shall corroborate this opinion. "I considered him," says Mr. Kobler, "an able minister of the New Testament. A man of a strong and vigorous mind, and of great powers of argument. His self-possession was such that it appeared as if the fear of man never entered his heart. His elocution was of a superior order, and flowed with unstudied ease, as if from the rich fountain of nature. He was a great friend of our Church, and a strong man to defend our doctrines and discipline. Indeed, taking him as a minister altogether, his moral courage, his abilities, and unflinching perseverance, he seems to have been raised up by the Great Head of the Church for the defence and confirmation of the gospel wherever he went."

## CHAPTER IX.

## FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1796, TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1800.

Mr. Lee visits Virginia—Attends the Conference—Decrease of the Church—New England—Letter from Bishop Asbury—Presides in Conference—Recommended to travel with the Bishop—Philadelphia Conference—Virginia—Unexpected Meeting with Dr. Coke—The Doctor just released from Captivity—Virginia Conference—Advises Bishop Asbury to rest—Mr. Lee sent South to supply his Place—Charleston—State of the Church in South Carolina—Georgia—Excessive Labour—Birth-day Presentiment—Virginia Conference—Persuades his Father to emancipate his Slaves—An Indignity offered to his Father—His own Views of Slavery—Journey North—Singular Cause of Conversion—Conference in Philadelphia—Petitioning for Preachers—Anecdote; Preachers *vs.* Reapers—Conference in Maine—Precious Fruits—Conference in Massachusetts—State of the Church—Statistics—Local Preachers—Returns South—John Dickens—An Apostate Minister—A revival Meeting—Stith Mead and John Easter—Anecdotes—Charleston—Supplies Bishop Asbury's place in Georgia—Enters upon Northern Visitation—Singular Commencement of a Revival—Virginia Conference; presides over it—Visits his Father—Baltimore Conference—Large Preachers—Philadelphia Conference—New York Conference—Prosperity of Methodism—A Night-ride, and bad Treatment—Journey South—Martin Boehm—Winchester Jail—A strange Meeting—Incidents of Travel—Charleston—Goes to Georgia—State of Morale—Whitefield's Orphan-house—Returns to Charleston—Virginia—Jamestown—Baltimore General Conference—Important Alterations of the Discipline—Mr. Lee nearly elected Bishop—Review of the Causes of Defeat—Feelings—Anecdotes—Note.

It was four years since Mr. Lee had visited the home of his childhood. They had been years of anxious toil, and great self-denial, but of blessed fruitfulness in the work of an Evangelist. He needed rest—such rest as home, with its associations and joyous recollections, imparts to the weary and care-worn sower of the good seed of the kingdom. Accordingly, on the adjournment of the General Conference, in company with Bishop Asbury, Dr. Coke, and others, he took up the line of travel to the south. It was a cause of great joy that he found his venerable father vigorous in health, and steadfast in faith. His mother was not; God

had taken her to her home in heaven. And his brother John, who had stood for awhile at his side on the walls of Zion, a young and valiant soldier of the Cross, was slowly descending to the house appointed for all the living. These circumstances made his visit one of mournful interest. But he murmured not. The creed of his heart recognised submission to God, as one of the first duties of piety; and he bowed his head and worshipped—leaning upon the staff of his soul's trust—the hand that was strong to deliver and mighty to save.

It was a privilege of this brief visit to attend a Conference for the Virginia district, held at Mabrey's Chapel, in Greensville county; and once more to mingle with his early associates in the gospel field. Of this Conference, which held its sessions in a private house, Bishop Asbury says: "We sat in great peace, and good order. A few Preachers declined travelling. We elected and ordained six Elders and nine Deacons. The deficiencies of the Preachers amounted to upwards of £194, Virginia currency." At this place the list of Church members, as they stood in each state respectively, was completed. The total was 56,664. Of this number 13,779 were in Virginia. This was the largest membership residing in any one state. Yet there was a considerable decrease in the Church; and had been for three successive years. In this period 10,979 members had been lost from the records of the Church. "The declension was mostly in the Middle States, and especially where the divisive spirit most prevailed." What had become of these members? They were not found among those who had wantonly assailed, and ruthlessly ruptured the peace and unity of the Church of Christ. Where were they? Perhaps many, like Cain, had gone out from the presence of the Lord, and away from the place of his worship, and were fugitives in the earth. Alas! for them. But woe to those who led them astray!

Mr. Lee returned to his district in New England, in January 1797. On his way thither he passed through many fields of his former labour; and was refreshed by pious intercourse with old friends. It was a matter of sincere gratification to find a gracious work of religion in several circuits of his district; and he threw himself into it with the ardour of a pure-hearted zeal for the salvation of precious souls. In the customary duties of his office he

continued to set an example of Christian diligence, even "in labours more abundant" than any under his supervision, until, in the latter part of the summer, when his field was changed, and he was called to fill a larger sphere in the Church.

The long daily journeys, and constant preaching of Bishop Asbury, were making sad inroads upon his health, and gradually wearing away his naturally robust and iron-like constitution. We find frequent reference to his bodily sufferings, in the period we are considering. On his northern tour, during the summer of this year, his health was so impaired as to cause him to abandon the hope of being able to meet his engagements at the extremes of the Union. Under these circumstances, he wrote to Mr. Lee, in August, requesting him to hold himself in readiness to leave the district, and go with him from the approaching Conference to Charleston and the more southern portions of the work. "Bishop Asbury needed such assistance; and the interests of the Church required him to have it. He therefore looked to Mr. Lee as a man whose experience, talents, and integrity, entitled him to his confidence." In compliance with this request, Mr. Lee attended the Conference at Wilbraham, Massachusetts, on the 19th of September. He was disappointed at not meeting with the Bishop, who, from severe indisposition, had been stopped short on the way. He, however, received a communication which, as a development of the opinions and measures of the Bishop, and as bearing upon some very important events in the subsequent history of Mr. Lee, we copy in this place.

"BYRAM RIVER, September 12, 1797.

"My very dear Brother: I am convinced that I ought not to attempt to come to the conference at Wilbraham. Riding thirteen miles yesterday, threw me into more fever than I have had for a week past. It will be with difficulty I shall get back to the Widow Sherwood's, my house at present. I have sent Brother Wells, who, next to Jonathan, has seen much of my continued labours and afflictions, for many days and miles. The burden lieth on thee; act with a wise and tender hand, especially on the stations. I hope it will force the Connection to do something, and turn their attention for one to assist or substitute me. I cannot express the dis-



trass I have had in all my afflictions, for the state of the Connection. We say, the Lord will provide. True; but we must look out for men and means. The Lord could have provided without such a poor, worthless creature as I am, crossing the Atlantic. You and every man that thinks properly, will find it will never do to divide the North from the South. Methodism is union all over; union in exchange of Preachers; union and exchange of sentiments; union and exchange of interest: we must draw resources from the centre to the circumference. Your brethren in Virginia wish you to come forth. I think the most general and impartial election may take place in the Yearly Conferences; every one may vote; and, in General Conference, perhaps one-fifth or one-sixth part would be absent. I wish you to come and keep as close to me and my directions as you can. I wish you to go, after the Conference, to Georgia, Holston, and to Kentucky; and perhaps come to Baltimore, in June, if the Ordination\* should take place, and so come on to the Eastern Conference. You will have to follow my advice for your health, steel as you are.

"I now conclude with my best wishes and earnest prayers for the Conference and you.

"As ever thine in Jesus,

"F. ASBURY."

Appointed by the Bishop, and elected by the Conference to preside over its deliberations, Mr. Lee performed all the duties of the Bishop, except ordination, to the entire satisfaction of the body. The Conference also recommended him to comply with the Bishop's request to aid him in the arduous duties of his office in the Southern Conferences. Leaving Wilbraham, Mr. Lee repaired to New Rochelle, where he found the Bishop somewhat improved in health, though yet suffering. In a few days they commenced their journey to the south, reaching the city of New York on the 27th of September. Here they were rejoiced to witness the manifestations of God's power and grace in the conversion of sinners.

\* "This has reference to a communication which Bishop A. made to the Conference at Wilbraham, which proposed the election of R. Whatcoat, F. Poythress, and J. Lee, as Assistant Bishops in the United States. It was rejected, being thought contrary to the form of Discipline." Thrift. Memoirs of Lee.

The Philadelphia Conference for 1797 was to have been held in that city; but owing to the prevalence of yellow fever and the great number of deaths, it was deemed advisable to hold it elsewhere. It was accordingly held at a place called Duck Creek, in the state of Delaware. Thither Mr. Lee repaired in company with the Bishop, still too feeble to preside in the Conference, but determined not to hold his peace in the pulpit. The following extract from his Journal, under date of October 10th, is characteristic of his indomitable energy. "I appointed the President, Elders to take my seat, and I sat alone, because the hand of the Lord was upon me. I was resolved to put out my strength to the last in preaching. My first subject was Isaiah i. 26-28; my second was on Luke xvii. 12; my third, 2 Corinthians xiii. 11. Great times, preaching almost night and day; some souls converted, and Christians were like a flame of fire." This was hard work for a sick Bishop—but the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. At this Conference, also, Mr. Lee was recommended, by a unanimous vote, to travel with the Bishop, and assist him in his various and onerous duties. A larger field for labour and usefulness was thus opened before him, but he fainted not. He entered with the confidence of one knowing the greatness of the trust, and resolved to face all its dangers, and brave all its responsibilities.

"As ye go, preach." This was the command of Christ when he "sent forth his disciples two and two." It was a law of life to the early Methodist Preachers. Preaching and travelling were the sum of each day's history. A string of appointments, from one to five hundred miles, always stretched ahead of Bishop Asbury. It is almost a mystery how they were made and remembered, as some of them must have sometimes been of a year's standing. We must follow these men of God in their companionship of toil and suffering. Eight days after the adjournment of the Conference in Delaware, they had to attend one in the city of Baltimore; and from thence to that of Virginia, held on the 25th of November, at Lane's Chapel, in Sussex county.

It will be scarcely necessary to follow them through the travel and toil of each successive day. A comprehensive summary will answer all the ends of our biography, and allow sufficient scope for the introduction of an occasional incident or adventure. It may,

perhaps, be proper to remark that beyond the fact of a peaceable session, we can glean nothing of public importance from any account we have met with of the Baltimore Conference. Taking up their line of travel here on the 1st of November, they reached Georgetown on the 3d, and spent the Sabbath in Alexandria. "In this place," Bishop Asbury writes, "I ordained Thomas Lyell Deacon,"—a gentleman who subsequently entered into the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Pursuing their journey through the counties along the Potomac, and crossing the Rappahannock at Port Royal, they entered upon a series of appointments in the counties lying between Rappahannock and James Rivers, forming a section of Virginia earliest settled, and more full of historic incident and interest than any other portion of the state. The Methodist reader of the present day, resident in those counties, may be gratified to learn that in houses where now, in the stillness of the country Sabbath, he worships the God of his salvation, these holy men—"faint yet pursuing,"—worshipped with their fathers. At Pace's, Shackleford's, and Bellamy's Chapels, they held meetings, the results of which must have kindled rapture in Heaven. While riding through Gloucester, in the early morning of a cold day, to their very great surprise and pleasure, they met with Dr. Coke, in the graphic language of Bishop Asbury, "on a borrowed horse, and a large white boy riding behind him on the same horse!" The fact that Dr. Coke was a very small man, may have made the contrast of the big boy behind him sufficiently ludicrous to excuse the quiet merriment of the Bishop. But the presence of the Doctor, apart from the circumstances of his appearance, was as much a matter of heartfelt joy to the group of itinerants, as it was of real astonishment. The meeting was wholly unexpected to both parties. The Bishop and his company supposed the Doctor to be actively engaged in Europe; and he only knew the Bishop was somewhere in America. The truth is, the meeting was one of the mysteries of Providence.

At the British Conference of 1797, Dr. Coke was sent with an Address to the American Conference, containing a request to cancel his engagements to continue among them, and to suffer him to return to England, to devote himself to the Church in his native land, under their exclusive direction. He accordingly

sailed from Liverpool on the 28th of August, in an American merchantman. The voyage was a protracted one, and full of danger. On Sunday, the 29th of October, the vessel was captured by a French privateer. The Doctor was robbed of his clothes, but allowed to retain his books and papers; and after being detained some time on board the privateer, "they contrived means to set him on shore, to pursue his way, and make his friends acquainted with the disasters of his voyage."\* Under these circumstances these brethren beloved of each other met; and after a brief interchange of sympathy, and an arrangement to meet at a Quarterly Meeting, perhaps on the next day, they separated. After this the Doctor "joined himself unto them," and they travelled in company to the Virginia Conference. The communication from the British Conference, although officially addressed to the General Conference, was submitted by Dr. Coke to the Conference held in Virginia. They could not receive and consider it officially, and they declined doing so. They nevertheless ventured an expression of their opinion upon the subjects it embraced, and proffered their advice. Bishop Asbury framed and signed the address, not officially as President of the Conference, but as an individual communicating the unofficial opinions of the members of the Conference. This document is dated "Virginia Conference, Nov. 29th, 1797." After stating the sole and exclusive right of the General Conference in the premises, it affirms: "No Yearly Conference, no official character, dare assume to answer for that grand federal body. By the advice of the Yearly Conference now sitting in Virginia, and the respect I bear to you, I write to inform you that in our own persons and order we consent to his return, and *partial* continuance with you, and earnestly pray that you may have much peace, union, and happiness together." He also gives a comprehensive summary of the state of the Church, and the burdensome amount of Episcopal labour; and gratefully refers to Mr. Lee, in the following confidential terms: "I have now an assistant, who does everything for me he constitutionally can; but the ordaining and stationing of

\* Drew's Life of Coke, pp. 281-284.

the Preachers can only be performed by myself, in the Doctor's absence."\*

At this Conference, Bishop Asbury sought the advice of his brethren, as to the line of duty under his deep and constantly increasing afflictions. They gravely considered the matter, and counselled him to cease from preaching, at least until the ensuing spring. They also requested Mr. Lee to proceed to the south, and supply the Bishop's lack of service to the Churches, by filling his appointments, and doing whatsoever it was lawful for him to do in relieving the necessities of the Bishop's absence and inability. The Bishop, after urgent entreaty, consented to this arrangement, intending to overtake Mr. Lee in a few weeks, and to accompany him, at least, in this visitation. But soon finding himself growing worse, he submitted to the necessity laid upon him, and wrote to his substitute, requesting him to go on and do the best he could.† Thus commissioned, and with all these responsibilities resting upon him, Mr. Lee addressed himself to his journey. It was not an easy one; having nearly five hundred miles to travel, and twenty-five appointments to fill, in the space of thirty days. But such things were common in those days of pure itinerancy. In so rapid a flight through the country, very little beyond the ordinary routine of riding, preaching, and pausing—not *resting*, that entered not into their calculations—to eat or sleep, is left for the gleaning of the biographer. It is enough to know that, in this journey, Mr. Lee met all the demands of duty, gave entire satisfaction to all concerned in the matter, and reached Charleston on the 1st of January, 1798; having left the Virginia Conference on the 29th of November preceding. It was nearly thirteen years—February, 1785—since, a mere stripling, he had visited the city, in company with Bishop Asbury and Mr. Willis, for the purpose of establishing regular Methodist worship in the place. On that occasion, Mr. Lee preached the first sermon; and a gentleman, named Wells, was brought under religious awakenings; his house became the home of the ministers, and his family the warm friends and steady adherents of the Church. But now he was not—God had taken

\* Drew's Life of Coke, pp. 285-6, where the entire document may be found.

† Hist. of Methodists, p. 252.

him from the trials of time to the triumphs of eternity. Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury were in Charleston when this first trophy of Methodism was gathered home to his rest in heaven; and they were privileged to pay the mournful tribute of their tears to the memory of this generous and noble-minded servant of Christ. Mr. Lee could only go to the grave and weep there. A very different state of things from those that marked his former visit, greeted Mr. Lee on his entrance into Charleston. There were now two neat houses of worship, and a flourishing company of believers to welcome him and wait on his ministry. The South Carolina Conference commenced on the 2d of January, and was conducted in great peace and harmony. This is the only record of it we can find. The Minutes report the members in Society in the city at seventy-seven whites, and four hundred and twenty-one coloured; and in the state, at three thousand three hundred and fifty-four whites, and one thousand one hundred and seventy-nine coloured. An increase on the preceding year, of six hundred and sixty-one whites, and two hundred and eighty-nine coloured; an encouraging result of the year's labour.

The appointments of Bishop Asbury extended into the state of Georgia. These Mr. Lee must also attend. Accordingly, on the adjournment of Conference, he resumed his journey, visited Augusta, and went to the southern limits of the Union. During this trip he met with many old friends from Virginia, who had left their native state in pursuit of a richer soil, and greater facilities to be "rich and increased in goods." He spent twenty-seven days, and preached twenty-one sermons in Georgia; and from the eagerness of the people to hear the words of life, he was led to express the belief that God would soon and abundantly pour out His spirit upon them to revive and save. Mr. Lee was a close observer of things, and his remarks upon the soil and its productiveness, the character and habits of the people, their fondness for high living, and their "ungovernable turn, both in Church and State," will furnish us with authority for the opinion that his belief of an approaching gracious revival of religion was founded in the conviction of its general and absolute necessity. As in all newly settled countries, the corruption of manners could not fail to strike an intelligent and pious observer. On the 8th of February he left the state, and re-

turned on his path to the remote northern sections of the Church. During the preceding year the plan of the Conferences had been so arranged as to begin in the south in the winter, and terminate in the extreme eastern states in the summer. Under this system the first Conference for the year had been held in Charleston. The second was to be held at Salem, in Virginia, on the 9th of April, Thither Mr. Lee now turned his face, following the track marked out for the Bishop, and filling his appointments, but not satisfying the great desire everywhere prevailing to see the Bishop in person.\* We may not follow him in his long and solitary rides, nor witness the earnest eloquence with which he warned listening multitudes to flee the wrath to come. Let us glean one ripe cluster from his fruitful experience, to refresh our own hearts while journeying along the highway, or resting by the way-side. In the pilgrimage of life Mr. Lee had reached his natal hour—always a season of calm and sober reflection to him; and he thus records the feelings that kept jubilee in his heart—that lifted up their voice and sung sweet songs of praise to the God of his salvation.

"Monday, 12th of March, was my birth-day; I am now forty years old. I have enjoyed religion twenty-five years, have been in the Methodist Society twenty-four years and four days, and a Travelling Preacher about fifteen years. I feel, as much as ever, determined to spend my days for the Lord. My soul is still panting after God. I wish to be more than ever devoted to his service; and if I live to the Lord, I expect to be in heaven before I see forty years more; however strange it may appear, so it is, that I have often thought that I should live till I was about fifty-six years old.

"I do not pretend to say that the Lord has revealed this to me. It may be from an evil spirit, or it may be vain thoughts. *Time will show*; but if I were called to die to-morrow, I do not know that I should have any objections. I do feel a pleasing hope of leaving all my troubles when I leave the world; but if my life is prolonged, I hope to be the instrument of bringing a few more souls to God, before I rest from my labours."

It may not have been a presentiment, in the ordinary acceptation

\* In his Journal, under date December 12, 1797, the Bishop says: "J. G. Martin brought letters of consolation from R. Whatcoat and Jesse Lee. *Also, the wishes of my dear brethren and sisters that waited to see me.*"

of the word, that impressed him with the belief that he would just about survive his fifty-sixth year; and yet it is a fact, that he did not reach his fifty-ninth. But he died daily in a self-consecration to God, that kept him in constant readiness "to depart and be with Christ."

Pursuing his route northward, he reached the seat of the Virginia Conference in time to preach its first sermon; on Rom. ii. 7. Of the service he says, "We had a most powerful, weeping, shouting time; the house seemed to be filled with the presence of God; and I could truly say, it was a time of love to my soul." "Bishop Asbury exhorted for some time, and the people were much melted under the word." The Conference was held at Salem, it is believed in Brunswick county, on the 9th of April, about four months from the one of the preceding fall: this was done in order to fall in with the arrangement for holding the Conferences heretofore mentioned. Everything was agreeable and harmonious during the session. It was a season of great spiritual refreshing. "Several new Preachers engaged in the work, and we had a very good supply for all the circuits." It was a source of great joy to Mr. Lee to meet once more with Bishop Asbury; and to find him, though worn and wasted with affliction, harnessed for the conflict with sin, and going forth, as of yore, in the front of the battle, "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." On the adjournment of Conference, leaving the Bishop and his companions to wend their way to Baltimore, Mr. Lee turned aside to seek a few days' rest at his paternal home; where he spent a week of unalloyed pleasure in social intercourse with his family and friends.

One chief object of this visit was to importune his now aged father to provide for the emancipation of his slaves. His father had not yet made his will; and he knew that if he died intestate it would involve all his children in the necessity of slaveholding. How many of them would have regarded this as an *evil*, it would be difficult, at this distance of time, to determine. But there is good ground for believing it would not have contributed to the happiness of either of the two sons who had given themselves to the work of "testifying the gospel of the grace of God." The elder of these, Jesse, was no doubt governed by this consideration on the occasion we are now examining. The language of his Journal,



brief as it is, is explicit; and fully confirms the opinion of his unwillingness to be left, upon such a subject, to the chances that would become certainties in the event of his father's demise without a will. He says:

"Saturday, 14th (April), I spent part of the day in walking about the plantation with my father, to see how he had fixed matters; and withal to talk with him about many temporal matters. I wished him to make his will, *for the peace of those who might live after him*, and for the sake of his negroes who are yet in slavery; but he was not determined about it."

The *italicized* sentence in this extract unquestionably comprehends those of the children whose "peace" might be very considerably disturbed by an inheritance of slaves. For this reason, therefore, as well as for the sake of the slaves themselves, he wished to have the question put at rest by a legal preparation for any emergency. He did not, however, then, nor at any subsequent period, succeed in securing an object for which he felt so earnest and generous a solicitude. His father left a will and distributed his servants among his descendants. One of these servants at least was known in the family as Jesse's, in the intension of his father, and he only escaped the legacy by dying before the will was written. Before passing away from this subject, two facts of some general interest may be introduced to the notice of the reader: the one illustrating the history of the times we are reviewing, especially with regard to the intolerance of anti-slavery sentiments among Methodist Ministers; and the other embracing a question of fact recently started in connexion with the character of the subject of these memoirs, and which deserves to be definitively settled. The first of these facts refers to the elder Mr. Lee. We have already seen that he was one of the first Methodists of Virginia, and to the latest period of his life, he was one of its staunchest friends and supporters. For long years his house was the *home* of its ministers. Yet he was a slaveholder, received into Society as a master of slaves; and lived and died possessed of them. At a time when the anti-slavery feeling was approaching, or had reached, the extreme point of its imprudence, this father of Methodism in Virginia was met with averted eye and rebuked with magisterial authority by those who had often sought his sympathy

and shared his hospitality. He was growing old, and was a lover of peace, calm in his feelings, and firm in his purpose to serve God and save his soul. He was not ignorant of the opinions the ministers he loved were broaching, nor of their plans to "extirpate the great evil of slavery;" nor was he unapprised of the sad inroads they were making upon the confidence of the people and the fortunes of the Church. But he held his peace, even while his sorrow was stirred, and his heart might have been hot within him. "From the loop-holes of his retreat" he looked upon the commotion around him without feeling its giddy whirl. Happy had he been, if left to pursue "the noiseless tenor of his way along the low sequestered vale of life." But no; party violence must rebuke him; and it sought to do so, when, like John, he was "reclining upon the dear Redeemer's breast." On one occasion, in the midst of these high party excitements, he knelt at the altar to receive the holy communion. Often had he knelt there, and those who had the rule over him were as glad to give him the tokens of the broken body and blood of Christ, as he was to receive them. But a change had come over them. They had found out slaveholding was a sin, and he was a slaveholder! When, therefore, he thus knelt with heart lifted up to God, and hand stretched out to receive the sacrament, he was—not passed silently by in the distribution of the elements, but openly repulsed, and rudely commanded to withdraw from the holy place. He was a slaveholder, and a slaveholder might not confess Christ before men! Calm as a Christian, dignified as a patriarch, and with a brow pale and passionless as marble, he rose and returned to his place: a tear stood in his eye, and a sorrow was born in his heart; but he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible, and when, in the twilight of that day, as was his wont, he "entered into his closet;" and prayed, he felt that he filled a lower place on a higher platform of holiness than he had ever previously experienced. The servant rebuked; but the Master blessed! This is one of the pictures of the times! The question of fact we have referred to respecting the son of so worthy a sire, is, whether he was ever a slaveholder. This question has been recently started.\* It may as well be settled here and at once. The question can only be answered in the negative. If he had

\* Since the General Conference in New York, May 1844.

survived his father, we doubt not but he would have inherited one or more slaves ; unless for " his peace," a special exception had been made in his favour. Upon this subject, however, very little need be said, as that little can be said with so much positiveness. He never received a slave by inheritance or gift ; and never bought one with money. This is affirmed upon the authority, *first*, of a near surviving relative who knew " all his estate ;" and *secondly*, of his last will and testament, now in possession of the writer, in which there is not a word upon the subject. More might, but need not be said. So much for the question of fact. The views of Mr. Lee respecting slavery as an institution, and with regard to the religious character and rights of slaveholders, are different questions, on which it is enough to remark in this place that he had no sympathy for the ultra views and disorganizing measures of those whose affinities found their level in the severe and reprehensible course pursued against his venerable and honoured parent. The position the stripling took in his contest with Dr. Coke, in 1785, was maintained when experience had matured his judgment, and age and devotion to God had added authority to opinions always weighty, and everywhere received with respectful deference.

On the 20th of April, in company with his brother John, now rapidly descending to the grave, Mr. Lee left the paternal mansion, in order to overtake Bishop Asbury, at the Baltimore Conference ; from whence he intended to re-enter his work in New England. In this tour, he spent a night in Richmond, and preached in the court-house, on 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. The Society here was small, and, as yet, had no house of worship. One, however, was in course of erection, and during the year, or early in 1799, it was completed. Owing to the inability of his brother, whose weakness required short rides, he did not reach Baltimore until the 1st of May. The night of his arrival, he preached in the Dunkard's Meeting-House, on Heb. x. 24. There was " a good little stir amongst the people. It was a time of love and weeping." Of the Conference he says : " We had a great deal of peace and union for the four days and a half that we sat together. No one was expelled, and none located. One Preacher was received on trial. There has been but little stir of religion in the bounds of the Conference, except in a few circuits." The scarcity of revivals seems

to be referred to, and very justly, as a reason for the fact that only one Preacher was received, and sent forth to the harvest of souls. Here, in the society of his old friends, he spent several weeks, after the adjournment of Conference; and it was his happiness to assist, as we learn from Bishop Asbury,\* in the solemn dedication of a new house of worship; the second, it is presumed, that was built in the city. It is worthy of mention, as it furnishes evidence of the popular confidence in his ministry, that Mr. Lee was selected, from among many, to preach the first sermon on the occasion.

There are strange mysteries in Providence; and "the Holy Spirit, who works when, where, and as He will," sometimes employs very singular methods to save a soul from death. Mr. Lee mentions an instance of this kind; the truth of which we may not doubt, but which, nevertheless, in its effects cannot fail to interest and surprise us. He had left Baltimore, on his northern tour, and passing through a circuit formerly travelled, preached at the house of a friend named Vansant. After preaching, in a social conversation Mrs. Vansant gave him an account of the causes that led her to embrace religion, as a matter of personal experience. We submit it to the reader, in the plain, unvarnished language of his Journal.

"After meeting, Mrs. Vansant gave me an account of her being brought to seek religion. She said, after her husband was converted, he used to talk to her about her soul's welfare; and others, Preachers and private members, would talk to her, and persuade her to serve the Lord; but she did not like to be spoken to on the subject, unless it was by wise and sensible persons; for she was too proud to be advised by everybody. However, the Lord took a strange method with her. About ten or twelve years ago, she and her husband were standing at the door, and she said to her husband, 'I do wish we had money enough to buy another goose; for we have but one.' Her husband said, 'Never mind; only trust in the Lord, and he will provide you a goose.' In a few moments, they heard the noise of a goose, and looked, and saw one flying in the air, which soon came and lighted down in the yard, with their

\* Journal, vol. ii. p. 315.

goose and gander. 'There,' says her husband, 'I told you if you would trust in the Lord, he would provide a goose for you; and now he has done it.' She said she was so struck with the circumstance, that she began to believe that there was something in religion, and so began from that time to seek the Lord. She is now a steady Methodist, and says she is happy in the enjoyment of religion. She further told me that they had inquired all about the neighbourhood, to know if any one had lost a goose; but could never find where the goose came from, from that day till now, and the goose is still with them. How strange is this! that a woman who was too proud to be advised by common men, should be humbled and brought to seek the Lord by a strange goose."

Pursuing the route marked out by the Bishop, Mr. Lee arrived in Philadelphia in time to assist at the Conference held on the 7th of June. Here, as we learn from him, and Bishop Asbury also, there were some unpleasant things, but not among the ministers. They were of one heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God. The laity seem to have created difficulty by pressing the Bishop and Conference to furnish them ministers selected from the first rank of talents, from all the Conferences in the Union. This could not be done without detriment to the general interests of the Church; and it has always been a maxim of Methodism, "better one suffer than many." The Bishop was willing to tax the liberality of the Connection, "to finish the Meeting-House in Fourth street; but he could not "draft the most acceptable Preachers to serve the city Societies." Mr. Lee mingled very little in these matters, except in so far as his advice may have been sought, and then he was always ready to show his opinion, unbiassed by fear or favour. While in the city he busied himself, as far as his semi-Episcopal duties would allow, in preaching the word—striving to glorify Christ in the redemption of precious souls. Indeed it was in duty, pulpit duty especially, that his soul prospered, and the fires of love and zeal were enkindled and kept bright in his heart.

In New York, on the 9th of July, Mr. Lee parted with his brother John. This was a severe trial. The journey from which so much was hoped had yielded nothing favourable to the general health of this suffering servant of Christ. He was evidently and rapidly growing worse. His symptoms were so threatening as to make it

indispensable for him to return home. He accordingly parted with his brother, and returned to Virginia by water. It was a sorrowful day for the elder of these affectionate brothers. It had all the painful apprehensions of a last parting to him. But *hope* pointed to a world, one of whose perfections is that "friends shall meet again, who have loved," and whose meeting "no parting e'er shall know;" and *duty* pointed one to a pathway of toil, the other to a course of suffering and submission, both, however, terminating at the foot of the throne of God. Which should pause in his career, or turn aside from the way? The iron-framed Jesse was not more resolved to *do*, than the gentle John was to *suffer*, the will of God; and thus both, in different spheres, but with equal heartiness, might show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into marvellous light. Grace was reigning in both, and each was yielding precious fruit.

It was probably during the period we are reviewing, that an incident occurred to which Mr. Lee sometimes referred in the social hours of his subsequent life. It was the time of harvest. A Methodist gentleman, accustomed to entertain the Preachers singly, or in companies, as they then frequently travelled, had gathered his neighbours together to assist in reaping his fields; and for their good cheer had provided an excellent dinner. Just about the time for eating, a squad of ministers hove in sight and drew nigh to the house, and were received with a generous welcome by the good man. Of course they must eat first; and they had travelled far, and were hungry. Under these circumstances, they made deep incisions and broad openings in the choice and well-stocked dishes. And when their appetites were appeased, there was a sensible decrease of the quantity of the material on hand at the beginning, to say nothing of the disappearance of the "nice bits" of the repast. Thanks were said with a general response, and the Reverend gentlemen gave way for their humbler neighbours. These paused at the chairs, and a hungry-looking genius, with a dry gravity of demeanour, essayed to ask a blessing upon the fragments that remained of the feast. Rolling his eyes first upon the meagre dishes, and then round upon the Preachers, he closed his eyes, clasped his hands, and said:

"O, Lord, look down on us poor sinners,  
For the Preachers have come and eat up our dinners."

A merry laugh from the reapers rewarded this sally of their companion. The Preachers were at a loss how to receive it. But Mr. Lee, into whose nature wit always entered without asking admittance, put a period to the embarrassment. Stroking his capacious and well-filled stomach, he broke forth into a broad, convulsive laugh, every voice of which betokened how truly he relished both the dinner of his friend and the wit of the reaper.

Advancing in their Eastern journey, they arrived in New London on the 20th of July; where, to his very great joy, Mr. Lee found the Society engaged in the erection of a house of worship for their own use. He regarded this as foretoking the prosperity of Methodism in the place, and prayed that in days to come it might be a praise and blessing to the people who should tread its aisles, and offer the incense of a spiritual worship in its courts. Before leaving the place, he preached at, or on, the foundation of the new building. Passing among scenes full of interest, and hallowed in every recollection of his heart; visiting old friends, and renewing former friendships; entering every open door, and preaching the great doctrines of the Cross in every place, they reached Readfield, the seat of the first Conference ever held in Maine, on Saturday, the 25th of August. The time intervening before the opening of the session, was spent in preaching, visiting from house to house for purposes of edification, and in such pious exercises as, according to the times, were deemed profitable for the use of edifying. Much was anticipated from this Conference. A very general interest had been excited, and multitudes near and remote were looking forward to it with a strong and pervading anxiety. And when the day arrived, vast crowds were assembled to witness its proceedings, and receive its instructions in the way of righteousness. The first day was engrossed with Conference business. The second was divided between business and devotion. Mr. Lee shall describe it in his own words: "The *second* day we sat in Conference very early, and broke up at eight o'clock. At nine o'clock we held love-feast, and had a large number of Methodists together, *and none else*. They spoke freely and feelingly. It was a good time. At eleven o'clock Bishop Asbury preached a good sermon;

and though before meeting he appeared to be weak, yet, while he was preaching, he was quite strong and courageous. We then ordained Timothy Merritt, Robert Yellaley, and Aaron Humphrey, Deacons; and Roger Searle an Elder. It was a solemn time at the ordination; but the people were so crowded in the galleries that were not finished, that some of the joists gave way, and frightened the people very much for a few minutes,—and some were slightly hurt. Then I preached on Rom. xvi. 20. My soul was much animated with the presence of the Lord. The people were melted into tears. It was a precious time to many. We next administered the Lord's supper. I suppose there were over two hundred communicants: it was a most solemn time at the table. I was astonished at the sight! to see so many people at the Lord's table, when it is not quite five years since we first came into this part of the country." God was working a great work among the people; and it was by such labours as we have just recorded, that so much spiritual good was effected. But the day's work was not yet finished. After these public services, Mr. Lee records: "Mr. Asbury borrowed my horse, and set out on his journey, and left me to settle the remainder of the Conference business. I was quite busy till bed-time. I felt thankful to God for the privilege of being at the first Conference ever held in the province of Maine." He had good reason to be thankful. Much of the fruit seen on this deeply solemn occasion was from seed of his own sowing. A joyful harvest had been reaped, on fields that, a few years previous, were barren and unfruitful; but now they were yielding in rich abundance the precious fruits of holiness and peace, to beautify the Church and bless the world. His surprise at the result of his labours is no drawback upon his faith in the power of the gospel to save sinners, and his joy no man might take from him, Other men had entered into his labours; but he was the first to penetrate that moral wilderness; and here, all around him, were proofs that he was sent of God: the proofs of apostleship, the fruits of the ministry—a renewed and happy people, were his witnesses.

The next, and last Conference for the year 1798, was to be held in Granville, Massachusetts. Bishop Asbury, having left Mr. Lee to close up the business of the Conference at Readfield, proceeded,



as his health would permit, to Granville. Thither Mr. Lee repaired, and the Conference was opened on Wednesday, the 19th of September. About fifty ministers were in attendance. Ten were admitted on probation. This Conference was held for the New York district, and in many respects was an important one. Bishop Asbury says: "We had many weighty and deliberate conversations on interesting subjects, in much plainness and moderation." But what the subjects were, we are not informed. Perhaps they were of local and temporary interest, that in the nature of things could scarcely survive the circumstances that invested them with importance. It is to be regretted that, since "our fathers" occupied so much time in Journalizing, they devoted so little of it to such questions of Ecclesiastical importance as sprung up in their Conferences; and which, beside the floods of light they might throw upon our history, might also serve as a most excellent guide in matters that now often demand the light of other days, and the experience of "men of old," in order to their just and proper settlement. According to Mr. Lee, the Conference at Granville was a pleasant and profitable one. "We had a blessed time in preaching; Preachers and people were melted into tears." "A good revival was in progress in many parts of the Conference. Multitudes had been cut to the heart by the word of truth, producing godly sorrow, and working repentance unto life and salvation. About one thousand souls had been added to the Church, and one-fifth of this number were in that part of the Conference lying in Vermont. These were cheering facts; a ministry congregating from such a work of religion could not be otherwise than warm-hearted and spiritual. Nor can the fact of the reception of ten candidates for the sacred office, taken in connexion with this gracious revival, be at all surprising, since it is one of the fruits, if not the divinely sought objects of revivals, to increase and strengthen in all the graces of religion, the divinely constituted messengers of the grace of God. This is so general and uniform a result as to have become an axiom. It is at least a settled opinion,—a cherished feeling among the pious.

Here the Conferences ended for the year. About nine months were occupied in attending them. It had been generally a successful year to the Church throughout her borders, and in every department of her operations. The membership of the Church had

been strengthened by a nett increase of 1422 whites, and 84 coloured; a total of 47,867 whites, and 12,302 coloured. Of this number, 10,856 of the former, and 2,432 of the latter, more than one-fifth of the whole, were in Virginia. Then, as now, the most fruitful soil of Methodism known to the Church was in the Old Dominion. Mr. Lee, who was very fond of statistics, and remarkably exact in them, had sought, during the year now closing, to obtain a full and accurate return of the Local Preachers within each Annual Conference. He gives the following as the result of his inquiries into this important feature of our Ecclesiastical polity: there were about 850 Local Preachers, distributed among the different Conferences, and rendering very efficient service to the Church in promoting the Kingdom of God in the world. One-fourth of this number, 251, were ascertained to be in Virginia. He also states the number of Travelling Ministers at 269, showing what is yet true, a very great disproportion between the two classes of Preachers. Perhaps a great majority of the Local Preachers had once been in the Itinerancy; but from various causes had been induced to locate. It was owing chiefly to this fact, that the General Conference of 1796 had given permission to the Bishops to ordain such of this class of ministers as had not been in the regular work. To this measure Mr. Lee was strongly opposed, and he made strenuous efforts to prevent the adoption of the rule. He feared it would encourage the location of ministers, already one of the greatest drawbacks to the efficiency and success of the work in which they were engaged; and he apprehended evils of a nature and magnitude then scarcely to be apprehended by any, but since most fearfully realized. He had the facts of the O'Kellyan schism, whose chief potency for mischief to the Church was derived from the local ministry, as data on which to rest his arguments, and a justifiable ground for fearing, if not predicting, future evils. There are certainly anomalies, neither few nor unembarrassing, in such a composition of the ministry, that prove the whole machinery an accident, rather than an element of our Ecclesiastical constitution. It does not inhere in the system: it is rather a graft upon it; and yet, to carry out the figure, without materially strengthening the tree, it, for the most part, yields precious fruit in great abundance and variety. Mr. Lee was not insensible of the good produced by

the labours of Local Ministers. But he knew that it required the cultivation of great leniency on the part of just authority, and constant respect for, and reverence of, that authority on the part of those whose position, in spite even of intellectual and moral superiority, like that of the centurion, is "under authority." It was a cardinal principle with him, that no man could, or ought to, take the office of the ministry upon himself, "but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." And when thus taken, the vows of God were upon him for life. It was a warfare from which there was no release. Regarding the ministry in this light, as pastors caring for the flock, he could not give his consent to a measure that exacted vows that, in the nature of things, could never be met, and provided pastors without ever intending them to have a flock. If we understand his views, at this distance of time, he wished to make provision by which, when circumstances demanded retirement from the active itinerant work, the Minister might retain his membership in the Conference, and still be associated in the authority and responsibilities of the pastoral work and function. It was from no opposition to, or want of respect for, the Local Ministry, that he stood up in opposition to their ordination, but because he wished to preserve unimpaired the integrity and influence of the ministerial office, and to perpetuate its efficiency in connexion with, and under the direction of the constituted authorities of the Church. Such were his views of what must be conceded as a grave question of Ecclesiastical legislation, and although they were not adopted as a principle of our economy, yet neither did they perish with their utterance, or die when he departed this life. They are living still among living men, but too weak yet to work out their consummation of excellence to the ministry, and glory to the Church.

Having finished the visitation of the Conferences for the year 1798, it only remained for Mr. Lee and his travelling companions to repair to the south, in order to resume their duties, according to the late arrangement, at the extremity of the work, as they had done in the preceding year. We need not travel with them through the long rides and daily duties of this southern journey. There are a few points of interest, however, at which we may pause and refresh ourselves with such incidents as may illustrate their character, and contribute to the truth of history.

New York, at this period, was a kind of plague-spot. The yellow fever was fatally prevalent; and the city was shunned with a most pertinacious regard to personal preservation. A remark in Mr. Lee's Journal indicates a very considerable anxiety, not only not to "come nigh to the city," but also to get quite out of and away from the state. He says:

"Friday, September 28. We made an early start, and crossed the North River seven miles above the city; *we rode quite fast*, and soon left the state of New York," &c., hurried through New-ark, and scarcely paused, or it may be, looked behind them, till night and Elizabethtown put at once a stop to their ride and a quietus to their fears. Amid the blaze of light that modern science has concentrated upon "the theory and practice of medicine," it is difficult to comprehend the fears which filled all men's minds, upon the appearance of new forms of disease. Flight was the supreme and universal panacea. Every one who could, "took to his heels" for safety; and those who could not, met the necessity of staying in the same city with pestilence, with a dogged submissiveness that, so far from being the offspring of a virtuous resignation, was not even creditable as an exhibition of manliness.

At Burlington, October the 3d, they were deeply grieved at hearing of the death of one of their most distinguished and faithful fellow-labourers in the gospel, the Rev. John Dickens, who, with his daughter, had fallen victims to the yellow fever, then also raging in Philadelphia. The following notice, in his Journal, will show the estimate in which Mr. Lee held the deceased, and the sorrow that filled his heart on hearing it: "I have not felt so much distressed at hearing of the death of any person for a long time. In the death of Brother Dickens, we have lost one of the best of Christians, a good Preacher, a worthy and much-respected man, and an uncommonly faithful Superintendent of the Book Concern." This was a severe affliction to the Church, in several respects. Mr. Dickens was one of the earliest American Methodist Preachers, having entered the itinerancy in 1777. After travelling extensively in Virginia and North Carolina, until 1781, he located, for some cause not now understood; but, in 1783, was readmitted into Conference, and stationed in the city of New York. Here he continued several years, as a pastor and Superintendent of the

Book Concern. In 1789, the Book business was transferred to Philadelphia, and Mr. Dickens was placed in the city, as Book Agent. In this relation he continued, until a triumphant death crowned a faithful and laborious life.\* Perhaps no one in the ministry of Methodism was so well qualified to superintend the business of printing books, in which the Church, with so wise and far-seeing a vision, had just engaged, as Mr. Dickens. He was an excellent theologian, well acquainted with the doctrines and polity of Methodism, possessed of very creditable scientific and classical attainments, and industrious and diligent in all the duties of his calling.† Dr. Bangs, from whom these facts are derived, also says he was the author of the “‘Short Scriptural Catechism,’ which has been published for many years at our Book-Room;” and that “it contains a body of divinity in a few words, selected from the Holy Scriptures, arranged in due order, in the very phraseology in ‘which the Holy Ghost teacheth.’” By this, “being dead, he yet speaketh;” and many a mind has been expanded to the perception and appreciation of saving truth by this short and simple manual of faith. He that drops a seed of the Word of God in even an infant’s mind, puts in motion an influence whose reign is mighty, and whose field is eternity.

A soul ruined by “making shipwreck of faith,” is a mournful spectacle. But a minister, an occupant of the holy place, fallen from his high estate, is a sight that might make an angel weep. Mr. Lee met with a case of this kind; and it affected him with keen pangs of sorrow. He says, under date of October 6th, and at a place called North East, in Maryland, “I was greatly pained at hearing of the apostacy of R—— C——, an old minister, dismally fallen.” The doctrine of “final perseverance” may be regarded by its advocates as “very full of comfort;” but there are many fearful facts in the history of Christianity, that make its teaching of very doubtful expediency, and confidence in its truth a questionable and terrible experiment. A fallen minister! He who stood in the high places of Christianity, trusted by men, and cheered and helped on in his way by angels, with an humble

\* Lee’s History of the Methodists, pp. 253–254.

† Minutes of Conference for 1798; or Bangs’s Hist. M. E. Church, vol. ii. p. 68. Dr. B. copies from the Minutes without acknowledgment.

heart, and a joyful trust in God, bounding along in the path of glory, honour, and immortality, to have paused in his career, or turned aside from his course, the crown fallen from his brow, and the leaves of the tree of life trampled in the dust at his feet, presents a sight dismal enough to make the cheek of darkness pale, and to freeze with new horrors the warm currents of a Christian's hope. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." It is possible to fall from grace; and, therefore, the urgent necessity of adding constant watchfulness to fervent prayer. We turn from so sad a picture to a brighter scene.

Pursuing their southern course, they were at Paup's Meeting-House, it is believed, in Brunswick county, Virginia, on the last day of October. By previous arrangement, Bishop Asbury was to have met the Local Preachers, perhaps of the Conference District, in this neighbourhood. A few only came, but they had a season of refreshing together. The Bishop preached "a good discourse" on Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. Mr. Lee exhorted; and "the power of the Lord was present amongst them. Many wept, and some cried aloud with deep distress." After the congregation was dismissed, the class-meeting was held. The Rev. Stith Mead then began to sing; and, in a little while, many were affected, and there was a general weeping in the house. At this stage of the meeting, the Rev. John Easter proclaimed aloud, "'I have not a doubt in my soul, but God will convert a soul to-day.\*" The Preachers then

\* STITH MEAD and JOHN EASTER. These were holy men, "full of faith and the Holy Ghost." A volume might be written of their mighty deeds in winning souls to Christ; and of their life-long zeal, and unwavering faith in the literal and exact fulfilment of the promises. The *former* was greatly blessed as an agent or instrument in the conversion of sinners. Wherever he went, whenever he preached, the word was blessed. The writer knew him when "in age and feebleness extreme;" and even then was he honoured of God in the saving of souls. He was simple and sincere of heart—took God's Word as a living and powerful agent of the Almighty Spirit, and preached it in full assurance of faith, both as to its truth and efficiency; and it was not in vain: Sinners were cut to the heart, mourners in Zion were comforted, and believers were edified and blessed. The *latter* was a wonder to many for the childlike trust of his belief in "every word of God." The gospel was God's voice of mercy and grace, and the Bible the words of its utterance to men. Faith had no mystery in it to him beyond the mere exercise of power. What he wanted he asked of God. Answers to prayer are promised. He always expected its fulfilment in the things he asked. The following incident will serve to show

requested all that were under conviction to come together. Several men and women came and fell on their knees; and the Preachers, for some time, kept singing and exhorting the mourners to expect a blessing from the Lord, till the cries of the mourners became truly awful. Then prayer was made in their behalf, and two or three found peace. My soul did magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God my Saviour." Such is the simple recital of a most glorious meeting, as given by Mr. Lee. Such results of preaching and praying, were common in those days of simplicity and earnestness. Indeed, they were sought as proofs of a Divine designation to the ministry, and also of the presence and blessing of God upon efforts made in conformity with the belief of having authority to teach, and to preach Jesus Christ as a powerful Saviour, always nigh at hand. Who shall say their views were defective, or their faith vain? The signs of apostleship were prominent in their labours, and especially in the success of saving souls, with which God so mercifully and so abundantly blessed them. Mr. Lee was particularly fond of such manifestations of the Son of God in His gracious power. It was a kind of fixed principle with him never to let a congregation go from his preaching entirely unaffected. He would excite them in some way. He would make them weep, if he could; bringing

his faith, and illustrate the doctrine of asking in faith. He was preaching once to a large crowd in the open air. In the midst of his discourse a storm rose. A dark and fearful cloud, vivid with forked lightning, and vocal with harsh thunder "muttering sounds of sullen wrath," and driven by a mighty wind, was hurrying furiously over the congregation. Consternation sat on every face, and fear filled every heart. The storm waxed louder and more appalling, and the panic-struck assembly started to their feet to seek safety in flight. Just at this moment the Preacher fell on his knees, lifted his hands, and implored God to turn aside the storm, and not allow it to prevent the people from hearing the words of life and salvation. Coincident with the prayer, as multitudes attest, the clouds parted right and left, leaving a clear sky over the worshippers, and deluging the neighbouring fields with floods of water. This is one instance of many related by the survivors of his ministry, of the public answers God mercifully vouchsafed to the prayers of his faithful servant. This answer to prayer and faith is related upon the authority of several intelligent and pious men, who were present on the occasion, and who assured the writer that all the circumstances left the clear conviction of a Divine interposition in answer to prayer upon the vast and awe-struck assembly. Kindred facts in great number and variety might be collected from our earlier history to illustrate the scriptural, God-honouring faith of our fathers.

his fine voice, warm affections, and glowing eloquence to bear upon this result, with strong and earnest intensity. If he failed in this, he would essay to alarm them with deep and solemn warning of words and manner; and, if all failed, he would shake their sides with some pertinent illustration or anecdote; and then, having moved them, seek, by all the appliances of truth, earnestness, and affection, to guide their stirred-up thoughts and sympathies to the fountain of living waters. A dull, drowsy congregation, was an abomination in the holy place that made everything desolate. It is related that, on one occasion, he went to a country Church, and, for want of publicity to the appointment, there was only one person—a lady—in attendance. He went in the pulpit, and she sat in the door to get the benefit of the sun, as the day was quite cold, and there was no fire in the house. Presently, to the surprise of the lady, he rose up, gave out his hymn, sung, and, as if a multitude had filled the place, gravely said, "Let us pray;" and, kneeling down, poured out his soul before God, in supplication for God's blessing upon the congregation. He next read a chapter out of the Bible, took his text, and proceeded, with all due formality, to its discussion. While he was preaching, "the fire burned," and, in the application, a flame of holy joy was kindled in the heart of his solitary hearer; and they praised God for all the good things He had done for them, and in hope of the great glory that is to be revealed to the pure-hearted in heaven. The congregation was formally dismissed, and all retired. On going to a house in the neighbourhood, who knew nothing of the appointment, he surprised them very much by his account of the meeting—assuring them that, in one respect, it surpassed any he had ever seen, as every soul in the house was engaged, at the same time, in shouting and praising God!

A grateful remembrance of favours was one of the excellencies of Mr. Lee's character. We may here record an instance in which this feeling is developed. The reader will recollect the friend he found in North Carolina, when in his youth he first went out from his father's house to act for himself in the busy world. That friend had departed to the place of his rest in heaven; and his widow had again entered into holy wedlock. In this journey to the south, Mr. Lee spent a night with the family; it was the first



since the death of his friend and benefactor. Soon after reaching the house he sought the grave-yard, and spent some time in reinvesting with the forms of life the pious deeds and precious memories of the past. He paid the mournful tribute of his tears over the grave of departed worth, and rekindled the fire of love in his own breast, in the blissful anticipation of a renewal of the pious association at God's right hand, high in the realms of bliss.

The 1st of January, 1799, Mr. Lee was in Charleston, South Carolina, prepared for the Conference then about to open. We have in the following extract a brief record of his pious feelings, and of his earnest desire to drink yet more deeply of the water of life flowing out from the throne of God. "I have now entered upon a new year. O, my soul! enter thou into greater depths of the joy of the Lord. I felt fresh desires to spend the year, if spared, more to the glory of God than I have done in former years." Such desires to advance in holiness, when sustained and seconded by earnest efforts to make each year and day an improvement upon the past, constitute the true philosophy of growing in grace. Mr. Lee had reached Charleston on his return route from Georgia, having parted with his companions somewhere in North Carolina, and pushed on into Georgia to attend appointments previously made for the Bishop. On the 29th of December, Bishop Asbury writes: "We came into Camden. Brother Lee had gone along on Brother Blanton's district." . . . "If I attempt my appointments that Brother Lee has gone upon, I must ride one hundred and fifty miles next week to Washington in Georgia." These appointments were all attended by Mr. Lee, and he arrived in Charleston on the last day of the year. The next morning Conference commenced. "We had thirty-three Preachers present belonging to the Travelling Connexion, including those just received to travel the ensuing year." Conference sat four days, and the Bishop says, "We had great harmony and good humour." There had been some measure of success granted to the ministry of these servants of Christ during the year. God was with them in their work of love; and no wonder they were glad and "of one mind and heart," in their Conference sessions, and "parted in much love." In concluding his notice of the session, Mr. Lee thus

breathes out the fullness of his own feelings: "O, that we may ever love and serve the Lord, and continue united in love all our days!"

On the 30th of January, Mr. Lee, in company with Bishop Asbury, took up the line of their Northern Visitation. He had been in Charleston thirty days. But they were not days of idleness or ease. He had preached "*seventeen* times, besides attending many other meetings in public and private." Nor had he been left without comfort in his arduous work. He says: "I often had such faith in the promises of God, and such a sense of his presence, that I could not doubt but the Lord would revive his work amongst the people; I frequently spoke of my feelings concerning this matter. Mr. Asbury seemed to think differently, and frequently expressed his fears that the people were growing worse and worse. Well, let the matter turn out as it may, I know that God was amongst the people, and that my expectation of a revival of religion afforded comfort to my soul." So true is it, that we find personal comfort both in the desire and effort to comfort others.

The path of the travellers led them through a neighbourhood in which there had been, very recently, a remarkable revival of religion. It was in Brunswick county, North Carolina; and commenced in the family of a Mr. Belvieu, from whom Mr. Lee obtained the following account of its commencement. A Methodist gentleman spent the night of Christmas-eve, at the house of Mr. B., and before retiring, requested permission to pray with the family. "The next night, Mr. Belvieu said to a young man of his household, 'What shall we do about prayer to-night?' The young man said he did not know, but he 'would read, and sing a hymn, if the other would pray.' Mr. B. said he could not pray. However, after supper the young man having been awhile alone in a room, came out and said, 'I feel a desire to pray in the family, and I wish you would call the black people together.' This request surprised Mr. B. very much, and he did not know whether the young man was in earnest or not. However, he went to the door to call the servants, but before he could do so, one of the women in the house began to pray with great earnestness; he ran back into the house, and soon they were all together in a flood of tears. All

the servants now crowded into the house, and the young man began to pray ; and they continued to pray until Mrs. Belvieu was converted, and then the young man was converted, and several others were deeply distressed on account of their sins. They continued praying and rejoicing till late in the night. This was the singular commencement of a gracious and extensive revival of religion, in which many souls were born into the Kingdom of God. Mr. Lee attended a religious meeting in the immediate vicinity of this place, a few days after leaving Charleston, and he records the liveliness and zeal of the new-born "babes in Christ." God "can work by many, or by few, or by them that have no might." The origin, character, and results of this revival furnish a beautiful illustration of the infinite resources of sovereign grace, and of the perfect ease with which "the weak things of the world may be made to confound the things which are mighty."

The next point of interest was the Virginia Conference. But they never travelled in straight lines. "The furthest way round, was the nearest way home," or to the point they desired to reach. In this journey their appointments led through Wilmington, Newbern, and along the seaboard counties of North Carolina, and Virginia, to Norfolk, and thence to the seat of the Conference in Sussex county. A portion of this trip embraced the field to which Mr. Lee had gone in 1783, on a tour of exploration, with the Rev. E. Dromgoole. The fields then were already white to the harvest; but there were few or none to thrust in the sickle. But now there were many labourers, and much fruit had been gathered unto eternal life. He rejoiced that so much had been accomplished. Had he not first scattered the seed of the Kingdom in those waste places, and might he not rejoice at "the wonders the Lord had wrought since" that humble seed-time? His joy could no man take from him; it was well founded, and it was full. He reached Jones' Chapel, on the 9th of April, in time for the opening of Conference. Upwards of fifty Preachers had assembled; and they conducted their business in excellent temper, and with great despatch. Nine were received on trial, and seven were admitted into full connexion. But thirteen located, and one had "ceased at once to work and live." This was a heavy drawback upon the Conference. There had also been a loss in the membership within the state of 386

whites, and 120 coloured. These were all discouraging, but they were not allowed to damp the zeal of their ministry, or to turn them aside from the path of duty as labourers in the vineyard of Christ. Indeed, judging from the remarkable success that crowned the labours of the ensuing year, we may conclude it stirred them up to a renewal of their efforts, and to a more intense and burning energy to make the gospel committed to them in deed and word "the power of God unto salvation." Bishop Asbury was too unwell to preside in the Conference; and that duty devolved upon his travelling companion. The Conference also advised the Bishop to desist from preaching, at least, until the Baltimore Conference,—a piece of advice he "was willing to obey," especially as he felt "utterly unable" to preach. This, therefore, devolved nearly all the appointments of the journey upon Mr. Lee—he was able to bear it.

This Conference was held within an easy ride of the homestead of Mr. Lee. The day after its adjournment the following entry occurs in the Bishop's Journal: "Friday, 12th. We rode to Father Nathaniel Lee's." The night was spent here in cheerful intercourse and pious exercises. Such a visit from the venerable Superintendent, and the beloved son, created a jubilee of joy to the whole household; and those familiar with Virginia hospitality of the times may readily imagine the bustling activity that sought to provide for the comfort and rest of the guests.

The route to the Baltimore Conference led through the lower counties of Virginia, along the Potomac to Alexandria, and thence to Baltimore. The Conference was opened on Wednesday, the 1st of May, and continued four days. We can learn very little of this Conference, beside the bare record of sitting "about three hours in the forenoon, and about three hours in the afternoon," and the gratifying assurance—since it reflects the sincere and ardent piety of the ministers—"We had a good peaceable time amongst the Preachers. They were affectionate, but had no great stir of religion, or any very lively meetings." Maryland, if comprehended in this Conference, like Virginia, had suffered a loss of 299 whites from the communion of the Church, but had gained 129 coloured members—a total loss of 170 from the pale of the Church.

There were great men in those days, as the following paragraph from Mr. Lee's Journal will clearly show :

"After we had finished our business in Conference, four of the largest Preachers amongst us went to a friend's store, and were weighed. My weight was 259 lbs. ; Seely Bunn's, 252 ; Thomas Lucas', 245, and Thomas F. Sargeant weighed 220 ; in all 976 lbs. A *wonderful* weight for four Methodist Preachers, and all of us travel on horseback." These were certainly very large men, but we can see no reason why Methodist Preachers may not be very large, as well as other men !

The Conference over, these indefatigable men were again in the saddle, pressing on in the path of their labours. Their route was through Delaware, and some of the ground had been occupied by Mr. Lee in the earlier years of his ministry. He had parted with his companion at Baltimore ; but they met again at Easton, and in preaching the word had a comfortable time together. Mr. Lee preached on Jude 3. He says : "I had a blessed time among the people, and my soul was much quickened ; there was a good move in the congregation. Mr. Asbury and C. Spry exhorted, with power. Glory be to God for that precious meeting !"

At Milford he preached on Eccl. xii. 13. And "had a good degree of liberty and power in preaching. It was a solemn time and a melting season with many of them. Surely God was there !" Here he had the pleasure of seeing many of his old and attached friends, and one who had miserably "fallen from grace." Mr. Lee did not suffer the occasion to pass without administering a solemn personal warning to the poor backslider to "turn from his iniquity and live." They both wept ; the one at witnessing a shipwreck in which faith and hope were stranded upon the coast of Sin ; the other in shame and sorrow for having paused in the race of life and turned aside from the way of salvation. What a mournful sight ; a soul wrecked and ruined ! And yet what multitudes thus deny the Lord that bought them, and put him to an open shame.

"Thursday, June 6th. Our Yearly Conference began in Philadelphia. We had a large number of Preachers together. At night, I preached on Matt. iii. 2 : *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* I had great freedom in speaking, and was led out far beyond my expectation, in explaining the text ; and the word took

hold of many hearts. Some roared aloud, and some shouted; glory be to God! it was a good time to my poor soul. I felt as if I could have met my Lord with pleasure, and have gone from the pulpit to glory." And in the Conference, as in the Church, there was "the felt presence" of God to cheer and sustain the hearts of His servants, "The hearts of the brethren were much united." A present, full salvation, by faith in Christ, was the constant theme of their ministry; and no marvel that they felt its power, as a pervading influence, not only in the pulpit, but in their solitary rides, in their Conferences, and their closets. Their faith kept God at their side all the day long, and held their hearts in constant communion with Him. God's presence was their paradise; His smile, the sun of their souls.

This was the longest Yearly Conference we recollect to have been held in America. It commenced on the 6th, and ended on the 12th of June. The Conference was a large one; but what business detained them so much beyond the then ordinary length of a session, we have no records to guide us in deciding. There had been some prosperity in the Church during the year. The word had been effectual, sinners had been made alive in Christ; and the consolations of God abounded in the hearts of many. Bishop Asbury says "the business was very important. Ezekiel Cooper was confirmed in his appointment by me as our Agent in the Book Concern."

Just one week after the close of the Philadelphia Conference, that for "New York and all the New England States" was commenced. A rapid ride, preaching as they went, brought them to the city of New York—the seat of the Conference. The annexed brief notices of the session are chiefly interesting as they furnish evidence of the pious feelings of their author. Mr. Lee says, "Our Conference began at nine o'clock. We had several candidates brought forward to travel, and they were mostly received. We had a large number of Preachers present, and they brought pleasing accounts, from their respective circuits, of a gracious work of God amongst the people. . . . We examined the characters of the Preachers, and I was thankful to find that they had generally adorned the gospel in their lives and conversation. . . . We had a good Conference, and have had an increase of members in Society, especially in the

New England States. The Lord has been very gracious to the Preachers in the bounds of this Conference." There was a sad pecuniary deficiency among the Preachers. Nearly one thousand dollars was wanting to complete the meagre allowance of the Discipline. This was no doubt the occasion of considerable distress, if not of suffering, among these self-sacrificing men. The Conference resolved to resort to a public collection to relieve this necessity; and accordingly "had a charitable day at all the houses" of worship to relieve the present distress. About three hundred dollars were raised by this effort—a very creditable amount for the times.

Here ended the Conferences for the year. In some respects, it had been a prosperous year for the Church. The Societies were united, and walked in the fear of the Lord, and were multiplied. Mr. Lee closes his current history of the Conferences of 1799, with these reflections: "Our borders were greatly enlarged this year, and the way was opening for us to spread farther, and to send forth more labourers into the vineyard of the Lord. We had an addition to the Society this year of 1182 members. Great peace and harmony prevailed throughout the Connection, both among Preachers and people, and the prospect of a great revival of religion was more pleasing than it had been at any time for some years; and in some places there was a good stir of religion, and many souls were brought into the liberty of the children of God."\* Such were the prospects with which Methodism closed its Ecclesiastical year. A few incidents from the personal history of Mr. Lee, and we shall enter upon the history of the period so full of bright visions and joyful anticipations.

A compound specimen—one of disobedience, and one of cheerful obedience to the command to "be not forgetful to entertain strangers," is mentioned as occurring within a few days after the adjournment of the Conference in New York. After preaching on the 26th, and riding exposed to a pitiless tempest, Mr. Lee rode up to the house of a Methodist, and sought permission to stay all night. The good woman made many excuses. He "told her Mr. Asbury was sick; it was then dusk and raining; but she said it would be best

\* Hist. Methodists, p. 258.

for him to lodge at the next house." Rejected here, they rode on, and applying at the next house, were told by the man, "they were not prepared to entertain strangers." This was cold comfort. Refused admittance to the houses, and not content to sit on their horses in the rain through the long night, they very naturally rode on. There was one other point before them. On they toiled through the dark and wet, building bonfires of faith and hope with which to lighten their way; and contending earnestly with every disposition to murmur against their allotment, or to reproach, even mentally, much less with bitter words, those who had sent them, sick and weary, from their doors. Midnight was striding to meet them, when they reached the domicile of "old Governor Courtland." But all was still, every light extinguished. It was their last hope for shelter; and in the confidence of despair they sent the hollow reverberations of their knockings through every corner of the building. It stirred the slumberers, and "they arose and gladly received" those who sought shelter and rest. And so cheerfully was it done, that the guests might have felt themselves "entertained of angels." They were not sorry for the preceding adventures of the evening.

They had reached the limit of their northern tour; and returning south through Pennsylvania, spent a night with Martin Boehm, whose singular history, briefly recorded by Mr. Lee, is worthy of attention for the facts it contains and the lessons it teaches. Mr. Boehm was formerly a Mennonist, and was chosen by them to preach before he was converted or had any intention of preaching. The Mennonists adopt the following mode of choosing a preacher: "When they want a minister they assemble together, and choose one by ballot; and then they take two, three, or more of those who have the largest number of votes, and take as many tickets and put them in a book. On one of these tickets is written '*This is to be our Minister.*' Each of those previously set apart draws out a ticket, and he that draws the one thus written is to be their minister." Mr. Boehm was thus chosen. And on receiving the office, inquired "what he was to preach?" They told him to preach "Repentance and Faith." He began to preach these great doctrines of the gospel, and they were mighty in his own heart, pulling down the strongholds of sin and unbelief,



and building up his soul in holiness and love. Having preached repentance and faith as a duty, and found them effectual in his own conversion, he now preached them with delight, and as a means of bringing others to the same joyful assurance of acceptance through Christ. But he preached them too frequently and with too great a relish; pressing them as of absolute necessity to salvation, and importuning them to repent and believe. This was carrying the matter rather further than they had contracted for, and they therefore compelled him to desist, and subsequently ejected him from being a teacher among them. He then entered into fellowship with the Methodists, and his children and grandchildren were united with him in walking by the same rules and seeking the same heavenly things. Mr. Lee completes his notice, by saying: "The old man wears his beard at its full growth. He preaches altogether in the German language; after I prayed in the family at night, he prayed in German." The day after this conversation we have this entry in his Journal:

"Wednesday, July 31. At friend Boehm's Meeting-House I preached on Isaiah xxx. 21. I had a very precious season in preaching, and the power of the Lord was with us, and there were many tears shed by the hearers. Thank God for another happy meeting." Bishop Asbury also preached, on Hebrews vi. 12. "He gave us a good discourse." Another pious engagement occupied the mind of Mr. Lee during this day. Two itinerant ministers had found a last resting-place in this country church-yard. One of them, William Jessop, was a beloved friend, and at eventide he went to the grave to weep there. A deep solemnity filled his heart, while he thought on the past, and anticipated the period when "the dead in Christ" shall awake from the long sleep of the grave, and, clothed in beauty immortal, stand erect in the judgment of the last day. He felt the full comfort of knowing his friend died in the victory of faith. And with joy he records the last words of his spiritual triumph—the victor-shout with which he ascended to his home in heaven: "My work is done. Glory! glory! glory!" "Oh, Lord! let me die the death of the righteous," was the prayer with which the humbled and sorrowing wayfarer turned away to his work, from the hallowed spot where the precious dust of a

faithful warrior was reposing after the toil and strife of his warfare.

Pursuing their route through Pennsylvania and Maryland into Virginia, we find them in Winchester on the 17th of August. Here we may see Mr. Lee in a new element, still striving to do good. He was consecrated to this very object. Availing himself of some leisure while in this place, he determined, as was his custom, to visit the common prison, for the purpose of speaking to them that were bound, on the state of their souls. On reaching the jail, how was he surprised to find a man whom he had visited in Georgia, during the last year, on the very day he was to have been hung, but who had been reprieved; and, as he informed Mr. Lee, had been subsequently pardoned. At that time, he professed to have been pardoned of God, and to have made all his arrangements for an abundant entrance in the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ; and he gave evidence, by all external manifestations, of being truly sorry for his sins, and anxious to lead a new life. But here he was in jail again, for crimes against man. How sinful he was before his Maker, no man knoweth. The sight of the man amazed Mr. Lee, and gave his confidence in death-anticipating professions of religion a most severe, and almost fatal shock. He was afraid of the seeming uncharitableness of concluding all such to be self-deceivers, but he could find good ground for hope in a very few; and he cut his confidence in the culprit before him short off with the remark, "his life is no better for all his pretended religion." Still it was possible to save them. Some may have been saved; and hope shed its lustre upon his soul, as he resolved, "as he had opportunity, to do good to all men," whether bond or free—tenants of a palace or a prison. One thing he would gain, if no more—the approval of Him who died for sinners; and that was enough to compensate him for all he might endure in doing good. In a prison, Christ might be "ministered unto;" and the probability of that would stir every power of his soul.

This incident occurred on the 17th of August; and the remainder of the year was spent in a tour through Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia; from whence he returned in time for the Conference in Charleston, on the 1st of January, 1800. In this journey, "Jesse Lee," in the plain and confiding language of

Bishop Asbury, did the most of the preaching. The Bishop was so deeply afflicted, that he thought "of nothing less than the resignation of his office of Superintendent at the General Conference." In one place, he writes, "I would not live always: weary world! when will it end?" And yet there was a vein of pious cheerfulness transfused into the brief notes of his Journal, that sometimes bordered on merriment. Of his accommodations in one family, he says: "Here we have kitchen, house, and chamber, all in one, *and no closet but the woods.*" To relieve a sick Preacher, he gave up his carriage, and mounted the Preacher's horse. He must have been a sorry hack, as the Bishop calls him a "stiff-jointed horse, that he would only ride to save souls, or a brother's health." Again, he encountered a train of "men *and* wagons heavily loaded with rum." During this southern tour, Mr. Lee detached himself from the party, and "formed a circuit for one Preacher along the borders of Oconee River." As an illustration of the general interest excited by these Episcopal visitations, we may refer to the fact stated by the Bishop, that from three to six thousand souls congregated weekly at their appointments for preaching; and thus thousands were brought to hear the gospel, that otherwise would have been prevented from hearing words whereby they might be saved.

Wednesday, January 1, 1800. The Conference for the extreme southern portion of the Church, was held in Charleston. "Twenty-three ministers were present. None had died during the year, none located, and seven were received into the ministry," as itinerants. The reports from the different circuits, including those in Georgia, show an encouraging state of religious prosperity. The signs of the preceding year had settled down into present and positive blessings. The good hand of God had been with them, grace had reigned in their hearts, and success had crowned their earnest efforts to make the name of Christ a praise and a blessing in the earth. In this frame of mind they finished their business, and re-entered the fields, everywhere "white unto harvest." On the day after their adjournment, Sunday, the ordination services were held. "At the new Church," says the Bishop, "before the ordination of Deacons, Jesse Lee discoursed on *The harvest truly is great; but the labourers are few: Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into the harvest.*" We

also find the following entry in the Bishop's Journal, under date of Monday, the 6th of January: "I desired Jesse Lee, as my assistant, to take my horse and his own, and visit, between this and the 7th of February, Coosawhatchie, Savannah, and St. Mary's (a ride of about four hundred miles), and to take John Garven to his station. The time hath been when this journey would have been my delight, but now I must lounge in Charleston." In those days, when our ministry lived in the saddle, it required but short notice to prepare for a long journey; and few could be ready and off in shorter time than Mr. Lee. Accordingly, he entered upon the work prescribed by the Bishop, on the next morning. In this visitation, he encountered many difficulties and great dangers. The weather was unusually severe. On the third day, he found snow two and a half feet deep. Such a storm, as was not within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant. He found a "family, frightened half out of their wits;" and he writes: "I do not remember that I ever saw more snow fall in one day and night, in New England, than fell in South Carolina and Georgia," on this occasion. Great damage was done to the forest and fruit-trees; and, for the time, travelling was very dangerous, as well as difficult. But he had no time to tarry; and he pushed on, and reached Savannah in time to spend the Sabbath, and to preach his first sermon to the inhabitants. The snow was scarcely diminished; but he pressed on, lost his way among the ponds of water covering the face of the country, and wandered all day, "not knowing whither he went." "At night, he was glad to find shelter in a log-cabin, without any doors, and with thirty or forty hogs sleeping under it." Shelter he might have had, under these circumstances; but *comfort* must have been on a visit to other and better dwellings. On the 18th, he reached St. Mary's—the termination of his mission. Here he rested, because "it was the Sabbath-day," and preached in the court-house to a large congregation of attentive hearers. From hence he hurried on, through mud, water, and swamps, making long rides, and preaching every day. His observations of the country, as furnishing a contrast with its present condition, might be interesting; but we omit them. What he says, however, of its moral condition, falls into our design, and may prove of some importance in illustrating the progress and power

of the gospel. He very dryly remarks, on this subject, "The country is very good for cattle, but at present it is a poor place for piety or morality; few people making any profession of religion, and many who are addicted to very bad habits, find a dwelling in these parts. Drunkenness is very common. Persons who violate the laws of their country, find it convenient to flee from justice, either to the Indians on the west, or the Spaniards on the south, and thus get beyond the laws of the United States. I heard of some people," he writes, "in the counties of Glenn and Camden, who were grown to man's estate, and some that had families, who never heard a sermon until last summer, when Brother George Clark first came among them," preaching repentance by Jesus Christ. "Surely these people will receive the gospel, and press into the Kingdom of God."

We said his journey was attended with great danger. The following incident will corroborate it. He was spending a day with the family of a Christian brother; and all had retired to rest, when the house was beset by a drunken man, beating the side of it with a club, demanding to see the preachers, and swearing with horrid oaths he would "be the death of them." Mr. Lee, "fearful he might do mischief, rose and fastened the door of his room," and sat down to wait the issue. After awhile he left the place, and disturbed them no more. *The Lord preserveth them that love him.*

On his return trip, Mr. Lee spent several days in Savannah, and improved the opportunity to visit Whitefield's Orphan-House. The reader familiar with the early religious history of the Wesleys and Whitefield, will not need to be reminded of the splendid conception of Whitefield to build an Orphan-House in the wilderness of Georgia, and of the enthusiasm with which he planned, and preached in Europe and America for the completion of a scheme that reflects the benevolence of his heart in brighter and stronger colours than it does the sagacity of his head. But he succeeded in the erection of the house; its efficiency in mitigating the miseries of orphanage, however, has very little in its history to relieve it of the imputation of a total failure. We believe the author lived to deplore the unwise and profitless expenditure of so much time and treasure. When Mr. Lee visited

the place, desolation had marked it for its own: dilapidation reigned in its deserted halls, and lank ruin looked out of its broken windows. Decay strode with sedate and solemn steps around the mournful wreck, leaving its deep foot-prints on every object; and oblivion, like a hungry vulture, flapped its gloomy wings, and whetted its ravenous beak against the sharp outlines of the crumbling mass. The following description of the place and building is given by Mr. Lee, and may be all that is left of what in a better situation and a populous country might have proved an ornament of the age, and a monument of the princely benevolence and Christian zeal of its founder. It was situated about twelve miles from Savannah. It had a centre building, with two wings, each one hundred and thirty feet long, one story high, and having four chimneys. It was surrounded by a brick wall, enclosing a spacious yard. These buildings, as if for very shame or sorrow, were hurrying to decay. A small family lived in one of the wings, some negroes occupied the other, and the centre was converted into a stable for horses. It is not surprising that the pious spectator of such a scene of destruction, remembering the vast expenditure of money, and the brilliant hopes that found a grave in the ruins around him, should find his heart swelling with sorrow; and secret prayers ascending to God to turn the captivity of these stones, and give vitality to a measure full of mercy in its conception, however unwisely it may have been executed. We need enter into no speculations as to the causes of this failure; nor dare we attribute it to any supposed mysteries of Providence. The fact that Georgia was almost a wilderness, with a sparse population of early settlers, will furnish reasons for a failure of such an undertaking, as sound and philosophical as they are discriminating and deferential to the truth of the doctrine of an all-wise, ever-present, and controlling Providence.

Mr. Lee arrived in Charleston on the 7th of February, the day appointed for his return by the Bishop. If the reader recollects the weight of Mr. Lee, and the fact of his taking the Bishop's horse with him, he will appreciate the remark of Bishop Asbury on the occasion of his return. He says, under date of Charleston, "Feb. 7th. Jesse Lee and George Dougherty came to town: the former hath been a route of about six hundred miles; *and my*

*poor gray hath suffered for it.*" Four days only were given to rest, preaching, and pious visiting, when the Bishop and his party were again in the saddle with their faces to the North. For some weeks, however, they were separated. The Bishop and Rev. N. Snethen, taking the upper route through Western Carolina, thence through Raleigh, and into Virginia in Mecklenburg county. Mr. Lee took the lower route, through Wilmington, following very nearly in the track of the appointments of the preceding year. In the last-named place, he remained long enough to participate in the public manifestation of grief occasioned by the death of him, who was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." In March, at Myrick's Chapel in Brunswick, Bishop Asbury says: "Jesse Lee and N. Snethen did the preaching." But at what place they met again, we cannot determine.\* They travelled in company thence to the Virginia Conference.

This Conference was to have been held in Norfolk, but the prevalence of the small-pox in that place made it expedient to change it; and accordingly the Preachers convened at Blunt's Meeting-House, in Isle of Wight county, and the Conference was opened on the 9th of April. The meeting continued three days, "in close, comfortable Conference." "We had grace," continues the Bishop, "but no gold; and we wanted one hundred and forty-three dollars of silver to pay the just demands of the Preachers to their sixty-four per year." Mr. Lee gives utterance to a remark, in connexion with this Conference, that is pregnant with meaning; the interpretation of which will be hereafter developed. "Here a certain person," he says, "laboured hard to keep the Preachers from going to the ensuing General Conference; and endeavoured to make them promise him to go immediately to their circuits." From the lights before us, we may remark, this advice was given with a more exclusive regard to the election to the Episcopate,

\* The following extract from the Bishop's Journal at this period, will serve to illustrate his character for poverty and self-sacrifice, as well as benevolence: "One of my friends wanted to borrow or beg 50*l.* of me: he might as well have asked me for Peru. I showed him all the money I had in the world—about \$12, and gave him \$5: strange, that neither my friends nor my enemies will believe that I neither have nor seek bags of money; well, they shall believe by demonstration, what I have ever been striving to prove—that I will live and die a poor man." Journal, vol. ii. p. 371.

that it was generally supposed would take place at the General Conference, than to any extraordinary zeal for the welfare of the circuits of which it was made the pretext. We may ascertain the propriety of this judgment when we come to the review of the proceedings to which it refers.

A relic that still attracts the traveller through the earliest settled section of Virginia, occupied the attention of Mr. Lee in his rapid transit to the Baltimore Conference. He crossed James River at Jamestown, and lingered awhile amidst the decaying memorials of the first residence of the white man in the new world. The homes of the dead only were there; those of the breathing and active multitude that once thronged its marts of trade and its halls of pleasure, had mouldered away into the common mass of matter; and the hum of business and the voice of mirth had long since died away like the low moanings of a retiring storm. Tombs of a century were there; and the tooth of time was eating out the names and virtues that pride or affection hoped would live on through all the periods of their country's history. The haughty aristocrat of the Old Dominion and the humbler artisan had found their level here; the virtuous and vile, the proud monarchist and the firm republican, had all sunk to the same repose, and side by side awaited the period when the long sleep of the grave should be succeeded by a resurrection to light and life. The Church, where they and their fathers had worshipped, like themselves, was crumbling upon its foundations and hastening back to primitive dust, and wild vines crept out of its fissures, and clung to its walls, as if anxious to prolong its memories, or to cover with their own vernal glories its mournful exit to the grave of oblivion. Its steeple, whence, for long years, "the sound of the Church-going bell" had given forth to the winds and waves its "concord of sweet sounds," but whose echoes would wake no more, was still there. And there yet it stands—a solitary monument in a scene of desolation. And long may it stand—a memorial of the faith of our fathers, to remind us, and our children, that Virginia laid the foundations of her social rights and civil polity on the immutable principles of the Word of God, and their perpetuity and glory are inseparable from the faith and worship of Christianity.

The Baltimore Conference was held at Stone Chapel, ten miles



from the city, on the 1st of May. It lasted three days, and everything was conducted in peace and harmony, is the only record we can find respecting it. There was one circumstance connected with it, however, that occasioned some surprise in the mind of Mr. Lee. He did not find the "certain person," heretofore referred to, at all solicitous for the Preachers "to go immediately to their circuits." We judge, he was rather anxious for them to attend the General Conference.

The *third* General Conference of the Church assembled in the city of Baltimore, on the 6th of May, 1800. One hundred and nineteen Preachers, as members of the body, were present; and the session continued until the 20th of the month. Many very important measures were introduced and consummated during the Conference. Among them we may mention the rules increasing the salaries of ministers from sixty-four dollars to eighty, and providing for their wives and children, as it now stands in the Discipline; and also the provision of the Superannuated, &c.; and for the widows and orphans of deceased Preachers; the regulation for the establishment of Parsonages, and the supplying of them with heavy furniture. The Bishops, who had previously been dependent upon private liberality, or the benevolence of particular Societies for their support, were now authorized to look to the Annual Conferences for their allowance, each Conference having to pay its proportion of the amount necessary to be raised. Each Annual Conference was also ordered to keep a regular record of its proceedings, and to send a copy of them to the General Conference for examination and correction. It was also determined to alter the composition of succeeding General Conferences, so far as to restrict the right of a seat to those who had been Travelling Preachers four years. By another rule, the Bishops were allowed to admit coloured Preachers, under certain limitations and restrictions, to Deacon's Orders,—a rule, however, that met with so much opposition, as never to have been much observed, and which was, by special enactment at the time, excluded from the Discipline, and never made extensively public: so that nine years after, when compiling his History of the Methodists, Mr. Lee supposes it was scarcely known, as a rule of the Church, to the Preachers.\*

\* See Note at the end of the chapter.

But the great leading question of the Conference was the election of a Bishop. We have already seen that Bishop Asbury "thought of nothing else but the resignation of his office;" and it is said he had gone to this Conference with his Valedictory Address, for the occasion, written out. But the first intimation of such a step was checked by the Conference; and they drew up resolutions of a highly complimentary character to the Bishop, thanking him for his distinguished services, and importuning him to continue his labours as a Superintendent, as far as his health and strength might allow. They also resolved to strengthen the Episcopacy by the election and consecration of another Bishop. The adoption of this resolution gave rise to the question as to the position and powers of the new Bishop: whether he should be second and subject to the direction and government of the elder incumbent,\* or equal and joint Superintendent of the Church. Nearly two days were spent in the discussion of this question. It was finally determined he should be equal in rank, rights, and powers with the other Bishops. These preliminaries being settled, the Conference were ready to go into the election. Popular sentiment selected two men as candidates for the office, either of whom, in a proper sense of the term, were worthy of it. Of these, the following just and impartial testimony is borne by the Biographer of Mr. Lee.†

"At that time there were two men, among many others, who deservedly stood high in the estimation of the members of the General Conference—Mr. Whatcoat and Mr. Lee. The former came to this country in 1784, in company with Dr. Coke and Mr. Vasey. Mr. Whatcoat commenced his ministerial labours in Great Britain, about the year 1769; and was therefore older than Mr. Lee, both in years and in the ministry. His experience and deep piety, and tried integrity, entitled him to great respect, but his strength of body had evidently much declined through labour.

"Mr. Lee was known amongst the Preachers as a persevering and indefatigable man, of acknowledged integrity, and of uniform piety; who possessed zeal which was not easily damped, and his

\* *Incumbent.* We use the singular form of expression, as no one seemed to expect much future assistance from Dr. Coke; and the Conference had consented to his return to Europe.

† Thrift's *Mem. of Jesse Lee*, p. 267.

experience could not be called in question. He had followed the fortunes of the Methodist Church almost from its first rise in America, and he knew how business should be transacted; he was plain and undisguised in his manners, and was greatly gifted as a speaker. To these two men the attention of the Conference was directed." There was very little, if any at all, of partisan feeling, and yet the friends of each were so nearly balanced as to deprive victory of triumph, and defeat of mortification. With these views and dispositions the Conference proceeded to the election. On the first balloting the votes were scattering; there was no choice. On the second, "the tellers reported a tie between Richard Whatcoat and Jesse Lee. They proceeded to a third ballot, when Richard Whatcoat was declared to be duly elected by a majority of four votes." Such is Mr. Lee's own simple statement of the course and result of the election.

To suppose Mr. Lee was not disappointed in this result, would be to suppose him insensible, or to claim for him a measure of perfection neither common to, nor attainable by, human nature. He did feel, and felt keenly, not so much, however, the loss of the office, or the preference of another as better qualified for it than himself, but because of the means to which some one resorted for the purpose of compassing his defeat. And as these means were disreputable in themselves, and injurious to his fair and honourable fame in the Church, he did well to be displeased with the offender, and with honest indignation to expose the offence.

The following extract from his Journal will fully explain his views and feelings on this subject:

"Tuesday, 13th of May. There was some uneasiness in the minds of some of the Preachers respecting a report which had been circulated by some person or persons, in order to prevent my election to the Bishop's office. The report was this: 'That Mr. Asbury said that Brother Lee had imposed himself on him and on the Connection for eighteen months past, and he would have got rid of him long ago if he could.' They came to me about it, and I told them I did not believe Mr. Asbury said it; but if he had reported it, I could prove to the reverse; so I went to Mr. Asbury about it, who denied it, and said he wished me to consent to travel at large in future, and to attend the Conferences, and assist in the business

thereof, for he and Brother Whatcoat never could do it; and added that if I would not consent to go, he thought he should be forced to resign at the close of the Conference. I told him I despised the idea of doing anything out of resentment, and that I had but two things in view, respecting my manner of travelling: one was the peace and happiness of my own mind; and the other was, the good of the Church, and Methodism at large; and that I had but little expectation of complying with his request, though I was not fully determined against it. I then told him, if he found freedom, I wished he would speak in Conference about the report above mentioned. So we went into Conference, and he spoke to the subject, and denied the charge, and said he was thankful for my past services, and did wish for them in the Conferences in future. We traced the report until we fixed it on T—— L——, and he did not clear himself."

After the earnest desire of Bishop Asbury, as expressed in his letter to Mr. Lee, at the Wilbraham Conference in 1797, to have him as his associate in the Episcopal office, and after all that had since occurred to authorize the expectation of being chosen to fill it, it was sufficiently painful to be defeated, without the additional humiliation of owing his defeat to an unkind and calumniating report, such as the one introduced in the extract above, and so adapted, under the circumstances of the case, from the peculiar veneration for Mr. Asbury, and the fact that the new Bishop was to be his colleague and assistant, to mislead and bewilder. Birds always select the ripest fruit, and so do slanderers. "These insinuations, thrown out at a time of general excitement, no doubt had a tendency to influence the minds of some against Mr. Lee, and in all probability was the cause of his not being elected." While, from all the facts of the case, it is evident Mr. Lee had many warm and strong friends, it would be improper to suppose all who voted against him were, in any sense of the word, his enemies; for, even in preferring the excellent man who was elected to the office, it is presumable they still cherished the highest confidence in his integrity, and esteemed him very highly in love for his works' sake. We may regret the non-election of our venerated relative, but we can cherish no unkindness of feeling for the memory of such of that body as, influenced by a discriminating

and honest judgment, had the manliness to vote in accordance with its decisions. We therefore dismiss the subject, with the remark that, with information and authority to say more, even to "bring to light hidden things," we forbear for the sake of the dead; and yet, simple justice to the truth of history, and to the memory of one of the Church's noblest and most devoted sons, would not be satisfied with less.

It is not surprising, still it is a source of considerable gratification, to find that "none of these things moved" Mr. Lee from his steadfast faith in Christ, and his joyful hope of salvation through Him. Perhaps he found reason for humiliation before God, and was brought to a more solemn self-consecration to the service and glory of Christ. Certain it is, he preached as if his heart, as well as his lips, had been "touched with a live coal from the altar" of the upper temple. There was a most blessed work of grace in the city during the Conference, and many were translated into the Kingdom of Christ. While multitudes were thronging the Churches, Mr. Lee remembered the masses that never went to Church; and he determined to go once more, as of old, to "the market-places," and call sinners to repentance. Accordingly, on Sunday, the 18th of May, the day on which Mr. Whatcoat was ordained, at five o'clock, in the Market-House, on Howard's Hill, he preached a most effectual sermon from John xvii. 3. To use his own language, as recording the fact in his Journal: "The power of the Lord came down among us while I was preaching, and the people wept and roared aloud, and prayed most earnestly. Joseph Totten exhorted with life. Afterwards several prayed with those that were under conviction. I was subsequently informed that seven souls were awakened by the sermon and brought to God. Thank the Lord for a few more seals to my ministry under the Market-House."

Two days after this the Conference adjourned. At a later period of his life, some friend referring to the subject of his non-election, pleasantly suggested that he was probably thought to be too full of wit, and too fond of it, for the Episcopacy. His reply was: "It would be *unnatural* to assume the gravity of the office previous to receiving it: put me in it, and I will sustain its dignity." This anecdote, and the following reflection respecting the General Con-

ference of 1800, will serve to close the chapter, and furnish us with very edifying proof that a momentary regret left no acid in his feelings and no cloud upon his heart. "I believe," he writes, "we never had so good a General Conference before; we had the greatest speaking, and the greatest union of affections that we ever had on a like occasion."

#### NOTE.

THE facts introduced in the body of this chapter respecting the General Conference of 1800, have been derived from a personal examination of the Journal of the Session. The following additional items from the same source, may possess some interest to the student of Methodist history.

William Ormond moved "that the Yearly Conferences be authorized to nominate and elect their own Presiding Elders."

S. Bostwick moved "that no Preacher shall receive any quarterage from any Steward, until he first give an accurate account of all the presents he has received the quarter preceding."

S. Harris offered as a substitute for this, "that the rule respecting presents be struck out of the form of Discipline." A majority of two-thirds voted for the substitute, "consequently the rule is to be left out of the Discipline."

J. Tolleson moved "that instead of a General Conference, we substitute a delegated one." "Lost by a great majority."

J. Lee moved "that no Preacher shall be eligible to a seat in the General Conference until he has travelled four years." "Agreed."

William M'Kendree moved "that this General Conference direct the Yearly Conferences to appoint a committee to draw up proper addresses to the State Legislatures from year to year, for a gradual abolition of slavery." "Agreed."

J. Lee moved "that the rules prepared for our seminaries of learning shall not be printed any more in our form of Discipline." "Carried by two-thirds."

William Ormond's "motion to make Local Deacons eligible to the Elder's office was negatived; Ayes 36, Nays 47."

May 19.—Lee, Cooper, and Bruce were appointed a committee to prepare a section for the Book of Discipline. "Moved that the African brethren in New York be desired to apply for a charter similar to that of our African Society in Philadelphia; but if that cannot be obtained, that they apply for such a charter as is granted to the white brethren in New York, under the title of African Methodist Episcopal Church: but if the above-mentioned title be not admissible, it shall be left to the New York Conference to determine the title, and all other particulars respecting the business."

May 20.—"Resolved, That Brethren Roberts and Snethen be requested to draw up an answer to James O'Kelly's book, and that Brother Morell assist them with his judgment in the process of the work." "Agreed."

"Moved, that when any of our Travelling Preachers become the owner of a slave or slaves, by any means, they shall forfeit their ministerial character in the Methodist Episcopal Church, unless they execute, if it be practicable, a

legal (deed) of emancipation of such slave or slaves, agreeably to the laws of the state wherein they live." "Agreed."

"In case of the death, dismissal, or resignation of the Superintendent in the recess of the General Conference, the Philadelphia Conference shall have power to appoint another Superintendent until the next General Conference."

This was the last act of the body—a most singular one—conferring the most extraordinary rights and powers on one Conference, to the exclusion of all the other members of the ecclesiastical confederacy.

## CHAPTER X.

## FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1800, TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1804.

General Conference Revival—Great Revival at Duck Creek—Mr. Lee in Philadelphia—Letter of the Bishops—Attends Conference at Lynn—Separates from Bishop Asbury—Visits the East—Winter in New York—Returns to Virginia—Incidents—Fredericksburg—Whitefield's Anathema—Death of Rev. D. Jarratt—Review of his Course towards Methodism—Affair between him and Dr. Coke—Important Letter—Mr. Lee appointed Presiding Elder—Size of his District—Devotion to his Work—Anecdotes—Rev. John Lee—His happy Death—Virginia Conference of 1802—Reappointed Elder—Revivals—Powerful Meeting—Contrast—Sign of the Cross—Enlargement of the Church—First Camp—Meetings in Virginia—Conference of 1804—Appointed to a Circuit—General Conference—Its Composition—Revision of Discipline—Stationing Law—Attempted Change of the Eighth Article—Book Concern removed to New York—Conclusion.

THE General Conference, whose proceedings have just passed under review, presents one characteristic that distinguishes it from all that preceded it. It was the blessed means of bringing many souls to "the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." The meeting in the Market-House, already described, was not a peculiarity of the place or the Preacher. Similar meetings were common, during the Conference, and were held in different parts of the city. And, as a general result, it is reported by Bishop Asbury that "more than one hundred souls professed conversion," during the session. This was as remarkable as it was gratifying. But surprise at such an exhibition of "the power of God unto salvation," on an occasion of a great ministerial gathering, is in itself as remarkable as the occurrence of a revival of religion. God's presence with His servants, and His blessing upon their word, are things very naturally to be expected; and, in this case, "the expectation was not cut off." Revivals of religion ought to be the rule; their non-occurrence the exception, in all such cases. But revivals of religion had been mercifully vouchsafed to many sections of the Church from which these ministers had come up to



the Conference, and they had brought the fire of holy love and zeal with them; and, under faithful and affectionate preaching, it had burned to the conversion of precious souls. And we shall find very gratifying evidences of success in this department of ministerial duty, in the winding up of the history and events of the year.

On the 2d of June, two weeks after the adjournment of the General Conference, the Conference for the Philadelphia district was held at Duck Creek, in the state of Delaware. About sixty ministers were present. Mr. Lee was chosen Secretary of the Conference. We can learn nothing beyond the mere Minutes of the business done. But one fact will, perhaps, characterize it as one of the most fruitful, in the work of saving souls, of any ever held in America. There was a distinguishing and powerful manifestation of the Spirit, such as is rarely seen, during the session. The Church was thronged, day and night, with earnest and anxious hearers of the word; multitudes were cut to the heart, repented, believed in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and went on their way rejoicing. Once each day the Conference spent an hour in public worship, and in helping the work wherewith God had so mercifully visited the people. The Conference was in session five days; and, in this period, one hundred and fifty souls were born into the Kingdom of God. The meetings, during this revival, were held almost without intermission. Once they remained in the Church, at worship, forty-five consecutive hours. "They continued in this happy frame of mind during the sitting of Conference; and there were but few hours together in which there was no one converted. Many people were converted in private houses, when by themselves, and when at prayer in the family." From this centre, the good work of grace spread to the Churches around. Preachers and people were animated with lively zeal, and carried the fire of love wherever they went; and greater multitudes were indirectly blessed by this great Conference revival of religion.

As yet, Mr. Lee had received no special field of labour. He still travelled awhile longer at large. We may not follow him in his daily toils of riding and preaching. The mere gleanings of a most fruitful field are all we can allow ourself. The Conference at Duck Creek closed on Friday; and on Sunday, Mr. Lee

preached twice in Wilmington. At night, he had a crowded house, and a great shaking among the dry bones. The word took effect in the hearts of sinners, and they cried out in terror. Many feared and fled at the powerful manifestation of the Spirit that maketh the word of the gospel "quick and powerful." Upon their flight, Mr. Lee dryly remarks, "Just so it was with *guilty Adam*, when he heard God coming in the garden. He ran to hide himself; but not to ask forgiveness for his sins." In Philadelphia, on the 10th, in a private interview, Bishop Asbury communicated it as the wish of the people, that he should remain for the year in that city as a pastor, and left it with himself to decide the question. He declined; assigning as a reason, his preference for a circuit in the country. And at the Conference in New York, on the 19th, the following paper, as to the sphere of his labour for the year, was put in his hands by the Bishops:—

"Jesse Lee is appointed to act as an Assistant to the Bishops in the Yearly Conferences, and to aid the Book interest in every part of the continent where he goes.

"Dear Brother: We wish to close the Minutes in (New) York, if we can. You must have some place therein: will the above do? York will be a blank at present. If you choose to stay until you think it meet to go down south, you may; and more, you may make your own appointments south, and omit going eastward. Or go, if you choose, to the east; or, if you choose, you may come to Kentucky.

FRANCIS ASBURY,  
RICHARD WHATCOAT.

"Saturday Morning, (June 21st.)"

The first paragraph of this extract was intended as an entry for the General Minutes, if Mr. Lee had acquiesced in the appointment. And the letter of the Bishops gives him the largest kind of liberty in the premises; and shows their very sincere desire to accommodate him in his future movements. Neither of the proposed plans, however, met his wishes. He desired to return to the pastoral work, from which he had been excluded for several years. He accordingly wrote to the Bishops, that he did not feel at liberty to

take the appointment as "Assistant to the Bishops," "or to travel at large; but, if he had any choice, it was, after making a visit to the east, to take a single circuit." It was, perhaps, impracticable at the time, to give him a circuit; but his wish was nearly gratified:—his name stands on the Minutes, as one of three appointed to the circuit in the city of New York.

The last Conference for the year was held in Lynn, Massachusetts. Hither Mr. Lee repaired, after leaving New York; and spent several days in delightful intercourse with his Christian friends. Twenty-one Ministers were present on this occasion; and their business was conducted "in love and union." Since the opening of the year, including the General Conference, seven Conferences had been held in the short-space of six months. Peace pervaded the Church, and success in the great business of her vocation, had crowned her arduous and apostolic labours. On many a field, God had poured out His Spirit; and souls, in great numbers, had been brought to realize Christ's power and grace in the forgiveness of sins. There had been a clear gain of 3543 members; and the Church contained a membership of 64,894.

At Lynn Mr. Lee and Bishop Asbury parted company for a season; the latter turning his face to the south to meet his annual engagements; the former, on a tour of visitation to fields wherein he had sowed the first seeds of a harvest that was now everywhere rich with its first fruits of faith and love. It was nearly three years since they entered upon the plan of travel through which we have been gleaning for some time past; and the relations in which they were brought to each other, their mutual labours and fraternal intercourse, had the effect of uniting them together in bonds of strong and confiding friendship and affection. We may easily imagine their feelings on separating; and under the rupture of relations, dependences, and duties that had grown into habits, and gave vigour and purity to all their sympathies. But sympathy and affections were kept subject to duty; and when it commanded, like Abraham, they went forth not *caring* whither they went, and only solicitous that God might go with them. Of his own journey, Mr. Lee says, under date of "July 22d. I left Lynn, and set out on my eastern tour, having concluded, at Mr. Asbury's request, to visit the Eastern States, and then turn up through Vermont, to

Canada, and so round to New York, and spend the winter in that city." We will not traverse this ground again, as we have often gone over it in his company. It is proper, however, to say that it presents the same features of cheerful piety, ardent zeal, laborious diligence, and faithful and effectual preaching, that we have already found to be distinguishing characteristics of his ministry. In proof of this, the following synopsis of travel and toil will not be out of place. He was eighty-four days in performing the journey prescribed for him by the Bishop. In this time he travelled, according to his daily computation, twelve hundred and sixty-three miles; and preached eighty-nine times—more than once a day. "In this tedious journey," he says, "the Lord favoured me both in body and soul." He arrived in New York on the 14th of October, and continued in the city until March of the following year. Of the nature of his labours here, some estimate may be formed from the following statement of the condition of the Church at the time. The first Methodist Church was built in the city in 1768, and dedicated on the 30th of October. "It is now," writes Mr. Lee, "thirty-two years since our Society had a house of worship in this place, and they have been increasing and multiplying ever since. We have now five houses of public worship. The first Church is commonly called Old Church; the second is called the *Bowery*; the third, North River; the fourth is called the Two Mile Stone, being two miles from the centre of the city. The fifth is the African Church, which was erected by the people of colour for themselves to worship in; yet they are to be governed by the Methodists in all their spiritual matters. But they themselves are to settle their temporal matters. This Church was built in the latter part of the past year. Besides these houses, we have a charity school of thirty poor children supported by the Society, and several dwelling-houses belonging to the Society. Three Travelling Preachers are stationed in the city, and are assisted by several Local Preachers. When we took the last account of the numbers in our Society, we had six hundred and forty-five whites, and one hundred and thirty-one coloured persons. Hitherto the Lord has helped us."

With this statement before us, we have only to recall to mind the indomitable zeal and energy of Mr. Lee, to be assured that in all the duties of his station, he was "in labours abundant." And

he was not without living witnesses of God's gracious approval of his efforts to save them that were ready to perish. But he was not fond of city life. It was too full of noise and show, for his unsophisticated simplicity of life and manners. Intending to return to his native state, and to devote his ministry to the building up of the fortunes of Methodism there, he rejoiced at the coming of the period when he might once more mount his horse, and re-enter the shifting scenes and cheerful excitements of the itinerancy. On the 3d of March, 1801, he commenced his journey; and, although we find no records of personal interest, beyond his usual method of riding and preaching, yet it is not entirely barren of facts of a general nature. Two, from different departments of study, may be mentioned. He spent a night at the residence of a gentleman whose mother had recently departed this life, from whom he learned these facts:—She had lived in three centuries, was one hundred and one years nine months and seven days old, when she died. She had three hundred and seventy-five descendants; had, from extreme age, lost her sight and then recovered it again; “and what was more extraordinary than this, was the fact that, after being for years white-headed as her crown of glory, she lost her hair, and it also was restored—but of the colour and texture that adorned her head in the days of her youth.” We do not recollect to have met with a case similar to this. Do these changes foretoken those which our physical systems will undergo beyond the valley of the shadow of death? Another fact, of a different kind, and far more impressive, is also brought under notice. The scene is in Fredericksburg, Virginia. On the 24th of March, Mr. Lee preached in this place, and was rejoiced to find the Church enjoying a season of refreshing. It was the first spiritual visitation for a long series of years; and it is mentioned in connexion with the following facts:—When Mr. Whitefield passed through the place, on one occasion, he attempted to preach; and, either while preaching, or in seeking an opportunity to do so, he was treated with so much rudeness and incivility that, in obedience to the words of Christ, he pulled off his shoes, and shook the dust from them, as a testimony against the place. And from that solemn form of denunciation until the time of which we are writing, it is not known that a sinner was converted; and it is affirmed no revival of religion had

ever blessed the place with its manifold spiritual benefits. Indeed, Mr. Lee informs us, at the time of his visit, "it was said there was not one person living in the town, that lived in it when Mr. Whitefield so literally obeyed the command of Christ as a testimony that the cup of their iniquity was full." We do not vouch for the truth of these things. We give them on the authority of one who closely observed things, and always spoke with caution. But, if true, the curse had worked out its consummation. The indignation was past; and God had turned from the fierceness of his anger, and now had mercy upon the people. A goodly number were gathered into the fold of Christ, a house of worship was erected, and seed was sown, that is even now bringing forth fruit unto eternal life.

The Rev. Devereux Jarratt, the early friend of Methodism in Virginia, had very recently closed his earthly labours, and entered upon the rest and recompense of his eternal state. Mr. Lee, on learning the demise of the spiritual father of his family, paid a grateful and merited tribute to his piety as a Christian, and his usefulness as a minister of Christ. The early friendship of Mr. Jarratt for Methodism, and his fellowship and co-operation with it in Virginia, justly entitle him to an honourable distinction in every history of the Church in the state. The influence of his faithful ministry upon the spiritual fortunes of Mr. Lee, and his father's house, would forbid the omission of his name in these memoirs. But the work of the historian would be far more gratifying if he might confine himself to a grateful and reverential description of the earlier records, abundant labours, and distinguished success of Mr. Jarratt. But history teaches that in age he alienated his feelings from Methodism, and opposed it with strong and bitter words; and historical accuracy demands, at least, a faithful presentation of the facts in the case, and of the probable causes moving him to pull down and destroy what in early manhood he had sought to build up and perpetuate. Devotion to Methodism, and a supreme regard to the truth of history, must plead the apology and vindicate the necessity of the subjoined comprehensive summary of an affair that we should rejoice to have sufficient cause to omit altogether.

Mr. Jarratt departed this life on the 29th of January, 1801, in the 69th year of his age. In 1806, his Life; purporting to be

"written by himself," was issued from the press in Baltimore, under the editorial supervision of the Rev. John Coleman, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Maryland. The *Life* is composed of letters, biographical and doctrinal, written by Mr. Jarratt at intervals from 1790 to 1797. They were all addressed to Mr. Coleman; and "breathe out" not "threatenings and slaughter" exactly, but revilings and bitter invectives. A somewhat careful analysis of his letters against Methodism enables us to classify his objections to it as ecclesiastical, doctrinal, and personal. We may briefly review them.

1. Ecclesiastical objections to Methodism. Methodism was in the ascendant in Virginia. It was rapidly gathering good fruits from every circle of social life. The Episcopal Church, no longer sustained by the state, was depressed and forsaken, and without spiritual strength to nourish it, was waning in every parish: its light was nearly extinct. Mr. Jarratt is the witness to testify of these things:

"The prospect here in Virginia is gloomy, and truly suspicious and discouraging. Churches are little attended—perhaps (I judge from report) not more than a dozen one Sunday with another; and sometimes about half that number. This indeed is shocking, alarming, and distressing, on many considerations—as it goes to manifest not only the low and still declining state of the Church," &c. "In a word, the prospect of the Church's prosperity becomes more and more forbidding every year."\*

Nor were Mr. Jarratt's own services much better attended, or his visions of usefulness more brilliant or encouraging:

"When I now go to places where formerly some hundreds used to attend my sermons, I can scarcely get forty hearers." "In my own parish also, I have the mortification to behold those who were once my near and dear friends, yea, my children in the gospel, fall off from me, and join with my worst enemies. Instead of crowded Churches as formerly, my hearers seldom exceed, on Sundays, one hundred and fifty, and for the most part, hardly half of that number. The communicants have decreased ten-fold."†

To one so devotedly attached to his Church as Mr. Jarratt was,

\* *Life of Jarratt*, pp. 178, 179.

† *Ibid.* p. 123.

these facts must have proved excessively annoying. But it must have been when *mortification* "shifting, turns the other way," that he felt at liberty to "attribute" them "to nothing so much as the machinations of the Methodists."\* And the imputation that the efforts then put forth by certain political aspirants to reproduce the irreligion of the French school of infidelity, might be traced, not to the "machinations of the Methodists," but to the imbecility of their ministers,† must be attributed to a feeling that sometimes, in spite of piety, springs up in a good man's heart. The multitudes thus forsaking the Church, heretofore by law established, had found a refuge and a rest in Methodism; and hence the letters of Mr. Jarratt, while lamenting the rapid decline and prospective downfall of Episcopalianism in Virginia, are replete with mournful evidences of "mortification" at the continued success and growing fortunes of the humble and laborious followers of Wesley. Indeed he ridicules the measures of Methodism, and seems to exult in its misfortunes—especially in the rumour of dissension in the body, and the destruction of its College by fire.‡

2. But there were doctrinal difficulties also in the way of fellowship with Methodism. Mr. Jarratt was a Calvinist, moderate it may be, but according to the doctrine of the seventeenth article of the Church of England. He was rooted and grounded in the doctrine of *the imputed righteousness of Christ*. This doctrine forms no part of Methodist theology, nor can there be any affinities for it in a purely Wesleyan creed. Free grace, salvation by the righteousness of faith, were the doctrines constantly, even vehemently, taught by the early Methodist ministers. The Confession of Faith—Predestination, and invincible grace,—and Methodist theology, are irreconcilable. Where Methodism prevails, Calvinism is not believed. The prevalence of Methodism in Virginia brought the Calvinism of Mr. Jarratt into disrepute; and as he would not abandon the doctrine, he had to follow it into retirement. In other words, as he would not cease preaching it, the people would cease from hearing him. Hence the complaint of being neglected; and here, also, is the vindication of the desertion. He complains of be-

\* Life of Jarratt, p. 124.

† Ibid. pp. 125-139, 156.

‡ Ibid. pp. 180-1.



ing listened to, by the few who came to hear, "in a cautious and captious way—for you must know I am accused of preaching *bad doctrine*. . . . But it is truly laughable to hear doctrines established by the greatest divines, for so many centuries, now condemned as execrable by those who never studied divinity in their lives, nor never read any system of theology whatever." Farcical as this may have seemed, it is a fact sufficiently established by the plaintiff in the case, that the altar on which imputed righteousness was stretched, blazed with no other victim than he who persisted in preaching it.

3. The chief offence of Methodism, however, and that which sunk deepest in the mind of Mr. Jarratt, was a *personal* affair between himself and Dr. Coke. In 1789, Dr. Coke and Mr. Jarratt met in North Carolina. In a brief interview the subject of slavery was introduced and discussed. Subsequently, Dr. Coke published his Journal, in the Arminian Magazine for the year, and introduced the conversation referred to. The reference is a very brief one; and alleges the ownership of twenty-four slaves by Mr. Jarratt, as the ground of his opposition to the measures sought to be carried out by himself. This statement, with a few merely incidental remarks of the Journal, gave great offence to Mr. Jarratt. Under date of April 15, 1790, in a letter to Mr. Coleman, he enters upon a somewhat general, and very caustic review of the Doctor's Journal, in which he finds much to condemn—nothing to approve or praise. He charges "five falsities" upon the Minute respecting himself, in addition to the general allegation of being "very trifling and not worth reading." The letter, as a whole, is the severest piece of composition we have seen from the author's pen. So much for the letter. A remark as to its position in the published Life of Jarratt is important to a better understanding of what follows. It stands, though the *first* written, yet the *last* in the book. It seems to have been inserted as an after-thought; and is introduced by Mr. Coleman, with the remark that "it was omitted in order to procure and re-examine Dr. Coke's Journal, and would have been omitted altogether, but being informed that some persons were prejudiced against Mr. Jarratt's Sermons on account of the Journal, it was thought proper to add it, though the work was already finished." It is possible Mr. Coleman did not know that the personal difficulty

between these good men had been amicably adjusted, nearly *ten years* previous to the death of Mr. Jarratt; and yet, from the intimacy between them, it seems scarcely probable. Still the reconciliation is a fact; the proof is clear and positive, and it involves the editorship of Jarratt's *Life*, subsequent to 1791, in a grave question of integrity. Certainly, if the letter in question had been "omitted altogether," it would have left the *spirit* pervading the letters of 1794-5-6-7, freer from blame; and the letters themselves less exposed to the suspicion of having fallen into careless hands. There are allusions to Dr. Coke in the body of the letters that will not quadrate with the frank and Christian letter of Mr. Jarratt to Dr. Coke, recently discovered, and now for the first time published.\* It bears directly upon the subject at issue, and acquits Dr. Coke of all the imputations contained in the letter at the close of Jarratt's *Life*. The following is an exact copy of the letter here referred to; and will satisfy the reader that the Editor of Jarratt's *Letters* would have rendered no disservice to truth and charity if he had "omitted altogether" all those letters containing severe and unkind animadversions upon the Institutions and Ministers of Methodism. But the work has been done, evil has followed in its wake; and though the time is long past, it is not too late to attempt its correction. This letter will do it effectually.

"April 19, 1791.

"Reverend and dear Sir: Though I assured you yesterday that you had a full and free pardon, for any fault you may have committed in the publication of your *Journal*, as far as it respected me; yet, as you wish to have the assurance of it from under my hand, I have snatched a little time to give you that satisfaction. And I do here assure you, dear sir, that you are not only pardoned by me, but have also gained an increase of my esteem for you, by the spirit in which your letter to me was written, and the frank and truly candid manner in which you have acknowledged what

\* This letter, now in the author's possession, is in Mr. Jarratt's own hand, and is unquestionably genuine. It was found some years since in a volume of Haweis' *Commentary*, originally belonging to the library of Mr. Jarratt. It is a draft of the one we may readily believe was sent to Dr. Coke. And although it is not addressed *personally* to the Doctor, yet its character and design are unmistakeable; and in all other respects it is perfect.

you thought to be faulty and justly offensive. I shall say no more on this head, but wish it to be for ever buried in oblivion.

"I am, not altogether a stranger to the great and extensive labours in which both you and my justly admired friend, Mr. Asbury, are engaged; and have therefore no right to expect a formal visit from either of you. - But should it ever be convenient, and consistent with your main design, to call on me, and spend some time at my house, I should esteem it a great favour, would thank you sincerely, and do everything in my power to make you both happy while you shall think proper to continue under the shadow of my roof. Wishing you may be the happy instrument of bringing many souls to glory, I conclude,

"Your sincere friend, and Brother in Christ,

DEVEREUX JARRATT."

This settles the whole matter growing out of the Journal of Dr. Coke, and the offence it gave to Mr. Jarratt. If, after this, Mr. Jarratt became displeased with Methodism and its ministers, and the earliest of his letters in condemnation of them is dated in 1794, the grounds of his renewed displeasure ought, in justice to his memory, to have been distinctly stated. But we find nothing upon the subject. Under the circumstances already mentioned, we may find sufficient grounds for the mortification he expresses; and under the pressure of mortified feelings, and in the freedom of a confiding friendship, he may have penned the letters so offensive to Methodism, and so defenceless against a just criticism; but that they were originally intended for the eye of the public, we gravely question. In 1806, Methodism had many adversaries. It may have been thought that Mr. Jarratt's letters would accomplish the double object of lowering Methodism, and of exalting, or contributing to resuscitate, for it was still prostrate, the Episcopal Church. We can see here a reason for Mr. Coleman's procedure in their publication. Beyond this all is darkness and conjecture. We know they have been, and still are used for these purposes.\*

\* We must, in a general way, except from the force of this remark the abridged Life of Jarratt, published in 1840, by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Meade, of Virginia. Yet, in omitting all of Mr. Jarratt's objectionable remarks, the Bishop assumes the responsibility of speaking of the early ministers of Methodism as

But we believe with very partial success in both cases. The nature of the object, and the inefficiency of the means, leave no room for surprise at such a result. To those familiar with the traditionary history of Mr. Jarratt, there has always seemed a discrepancy between his character while living, and his life as published. The letter here introduced is *like* Mr. Jarratt: those of Mr. Coleman scarcely resemble him. With all our veneration for the character of Mr. Jarratt, we cannot disguise the fact that all, or most of the principal complaints against the Methodists, are based upon occurrences previous to 1789. In 1791, in his letter to Dr. Coke, he wishes the affair between them "to be for ever buried in oblivion;" and speaks with heart-felt pleasure of his "justly admired friend, Mr. Asbury." And yet, in 1794, in reviewing his life, he introduces references to these "justly admired" ministers, and the occurrences of our earlier Ecclesiastical history, for which we can find no warrant in the letter to Dr. Coke, and no reason in any event subsequent to it. As facts occurring in his history, they properly belonged to a narrative of his life. But then his reconciliation with Dr. Coke, and his admiration for "Mr. Asbury" *after* their occurrence, were also facts, neutralizing the character and destroying the force of the pre-existing difficulties; and they were justly entitled to a place in his history.\* Their presence would have constituted an antidote sufficient for the vindication of Methodism. We have only supplied this defect in the life of Mr. Jarratt, and may safely leave the subject to the award of the reader.

"the zealous exhorters of Mr. Wesley," and of their "meetings for prayer and exhortation"—terms of reproach, in so far as they affect to deny them the title and character of ministers, as offensive to Methodism as they are unbecoming the personal worth and official position of their author.

\* In connexion with these facts, and bearing upon the general subject, it may be stated that, by special request, Bishop Asbury preached the funeral sermon of Mr. Jarratt, on Sunday, the 19th of April. The text for the occasion was Matt. xxv. 21: *His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, &c.* The Bishop also pays a just and affectionate tribute to the character of his departed friend. Whether he ever saw the "Life of Jarratt" we know not. If he did, he must have experienced a very great surprise. He could have anticipated nothing of the kind when preaching the funeral sermon; and bearing testimony so broad and unselfish to the social and ministerial excellencies of his friend.

The Virginia Conference for the year 1801, was held at Dromgoole's Chapel, in Brunswick county, on the 9th of April.\* Mr. Lee attended the Conference, and received his regular appointment from it, and within its bounds. Bishop Asbury says: "Brother Lee preached on Saturday;" but about what, and with what results, there is no ground even for conjecture. His appointment for the year was to the Presiding Eldership of what was called the South District of Virginia; but known in the Minutes as Norfolk District, comprehending within its geographical limits nearly one-half of the present Virginia Conference. It had nine appointments and eighteen Preachers, and extended in length from Norfolk nearly to Lynchburg; and in width embraced the country lying between the James and Roanoke Rivers, and their outlets to the ocean. Mr. Lee did not prefer such an official position in the Church. He desired the more quiet and less laborious employments of a circuit. Having spent several years in traversing the Ecclesiastical continent, and in the truly missionary ground of New England, he had come to his native state, not positively to rest, but to "do the work of an evangelist" in a smaller sphere, and in fields well cultivated it is true, but still offering work enough to tax his best and most enduring energies. The soil of his own heart, he felt, could be better cared for in the routine of circuit-life, than in the stirring scenes and exciting responsibilities of a district; and he greatly desired to strengthen and increase his own faith and holiness by all the appliances of pastoral duty and personal devotion. But, notwithstanding these desires, he did not complain of the appointment, nor hesitate to enter upon its duties. He had laid himself upon the altar of sacrifice; and he cheerfully met all the demands of the consecrating act. As characteristic of himself, as well as in proof of his fidelity to his engagements, it may be stated that during the Conference year he "attended twenty-five Quarterly Meetings, was present at twenty-seven love-feasts, and preached two hundred and ninety-four sermons." He also made it a rule "to preach at every regular preaching-place in the bounds of his dis-

\* "This Conference was appointed for the first day of April; but the Bishops said they forgot the time, and directed the Preachers to make their appointments beforehand, so as to bring them to Conference on the 9th of April." Hist. Methodists, p. 276.

trict, at least once a year." "In all labour there is profit." The truth of this saying of the wise man was abundantly verified in the labours and experience of Mr. Lee. In the abundance of his zeal for others, he was greatly blessed of God; and his profiting appeared in a richer experience of the things of God, and a constantly augmenting pleasure in the work whereunto he was called of the Holy Ghost. Hence, when at the solemn close of the year, he sat down to "commune with his own heart," and to "talk with his past hours," he joyfully records his recollections of the goodness of God, and of the stability of his soul amidst the commotions and mutations of time. "Thus far I have endeavoured to fill my station faithfully, and have been greatly comforted amongst the Preachers and people. . . . I bless God that I do love him, and I love his people; and it is the determination of my soul to serve Him all the days of my life. Whether I live or die, I dedicate my soul and body to the Lord, to be wholly His without reserve, for ever and for evermore. Even so. Amen: Come, Lord Jesus."

But life has its changes; and "the contradiction of sinners" often breaks the unity, if not the harmony, of one's best feelings. Mr. Lee had a keen sense of the ridiculous; and unequivocal powers of exposing and rebuking it. On one occasion, when he was engaged in the opening services of public worship, he perceived the gentlemen intermixed with the ladies, and occupying seats appropriated to them. Supposing them to be unaware of the violation of the order of things, he respectfully stated the rule upon the subject, and requested them to take seats on their own side of the house. All but a few immediately complied with the request. It was again repeated; and all but one left. He stood his ground, as if determined not to yield. Again the rule was repeated, and the request followed it. But no disposition to retire was indicated. Leaning down upon the desk, and fixing his penetrating eye upon the offender for a moment, and then raising himself erect, and looking with an arch smile over the congregation, he drawled out: "Well, brethren, I asked the *gentlemen* to retire from those seats, and *they* did so. But it seems *that man* is determined not to move. We must, therefore, serve him as the little boys say, when a marble slips from their fingers—let him 'go for *slippance*.'" To say he *slipped* out of the house, is only to describe

the fact in language borrowed from the figure by which the rebuke was conveyed. At another time, while engaged in preaching, he was not a little mortified to discover many of the congregation taking rest in sleep; and not a little annoyed by the loud talking of the people in the yard. Pausing long enough for the absence of the sound to startle the sleepers, he raised his voice, and cried out: "I'll thank the people in the yard not to talk so loud; they'll wake up the people in the house!" This was "killing two birds with one stone," in a most adroit and effectual manner.

In the latter part of this year, Mr. Lee received the melancholy intelligence of the death of his brother John. This mournful event occurred in Wilkes county, North Carolina, on the 6th of October, 1801. Mr. John Lee was born on the 12th of March, 1770; converted July 13, 1787; was admitted into the Travelling Ministry, September 12, 1788; and laboured, with great zeal and usefulness, for several years. In 1788, he laboured with his brother on Flanders circuit. Here he was instrumental in "turning many to righteousness." In 1789, he travelled Long Island circuit, in connexion with Wm. Phœbus. After spending some time on the island, he was transferred to New Rochelle circuit, and thence, in due order, to labour with his brother in Connecticut. At the New York Conference, in 1790, he was appointed to New Haven circuit; but his own declining health, and the intelligence of the death of his venerable mother, determined him to "return to his father's house;" and he was never again in circumstances to admit of his travelling a circuit. He subsequently settled in Petersburg; and maintained his integrity as a Christian Minister, until he was called to a better and a more enduring inheritance in heaven. In the summer of 1801, he entered upon a tour through the mountainous districts of his native state; seeking, but vainly, to recruit his waning health. During this trip, his letters breathe patience of spirit, and are full of holy resignation. In one of them, he says;—"I thank God that I delight in resigning myself to Him, and wish, with all my heart—

‘His pleasure to fulfil.’

I long to be like Him, and to suffer with Him, that I may reign with Him." In this happy frame of quiet and holy feeling, he continued gradually to descend to the house appointed for all living. His death

was as singular in its external characteristics, as it was glorious in its triumph over the fear of the last enemy. The subjoined simple but affecting record of his departure out of this world, is copied from the brief Memorial of his life, written by his brother. While yet journeying, he was sensible the time of his departure was just at hand. Late in the day on which he died, he reached the residence of Mrs. Brown, a pious widow, accustomed to entertain strangers. He had not been long here, before he informed the family he expected to die during the night. This greatly surprised them, especially as he was then walking about the floor. "He then went out" to his servant, "Ezekiel, who was feeding the horses, and told him to take good care of them, for he should never see them fed any more. He asked Ezekiel to sit down on a log by him, and told him the ulcer on his lungs had broke, and he should die that night. He complained of shortness of breath, but no pain at all. He gave Ezekiel some of his most valuable papers, and directed him what to do with them. He also gave him instructions about getting home, &c. He then said, 'I shall die to-night; and when I am dead, I want you to go down (into Surry county) and get Brother Moss and Brother Parks to come and bury me.' All this time he talked with the utmost composure, as though nothing was the matter with him, or as if he were giving directions about the death of another person. He continued the conversation until it was nearly dark, and then returned to the house. On entering the house he asked for water, bathed his feet, and said, 'I am sure I am about to die.' He asked some of the family if they could sing, and being answered, 'Not well,' he asked if any of them would pray? But all were silent. He then kneeled down and prayed aloud for some time, and begged the Lord to give him patience, and take him to heaven. As he arose from prayer he said, 'My work is done.' He then said to Ezekiel, 'Give my love to everybody, and tell my friends not to mourn or grieve after me, for I am happy and sure of heaven.' After awhile, he again knelt down, and prayed a second time; and then, getting up, walked about, and told the family he was now about to die. He knelt a third time and prayed, till his servant, perceiving the failure of his voice, took hold of him and said, 'Master John, get up;' and, lifting him up, he placed him on a chair, and sat by him. Being in



a profuse sweat, he said, 'Ezekiel, wipe my face.' After performing this last office, he took him in his arms and laid him on a bed. He just stretched himself, and died in Jesus, without a struggle or a groan." The weary wheels of life stood still. What a tranquil close of a quiet and holy life! Much of his life had been spent on his knees, and he wished to ascend from them to the place of his rest, where he should stand erect and free for ever. The sympathy of his servant prevented that consummation of his hopes, but could not hold him back from the multitude of worshippers "before the throne of God and the Lamb." So closed a life that in early youth had been consecrated to its Creator, and every period of which had been replete with simplicity and purity. "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints." Funeral sermons, in commemoration of this departed servant of Christ, were preached by Bishop Whatcoat, at the place of his burial, on Ps. cxvi. 15; by his brother, at his father's, on Dan. xii. 3; and by Bishop Asbury, in Petersburg, his place of residence, on Phil. ii. 20.\* These facts will serve to show the estimate in which he was held while living. He was a burning and shining light; and, for zeal, affection, and devotion to the duties of the ministry, his career, brief as it was, was full of promise to the Church. But, in the midst of his usefulness, he was taken to the more congenial employments of the temple service in heaven.

The Virginia Conference for 1802 was held at Salem Meeting-House, it is believed in Greenville county, on the 1st of March. The Conference was in session four days. Four Preachers were received; but Bishop Asbury regrets the deficiency of ministers for the demands of the work. He mentions ten appointments that ought to have had an additional minister. There was a gracious revival of religion during the session. About

\* Bishop Asbury, Journal, vol. iii. p. 56, says: "By appointment (in Petersburg), I preached John Lee's funeral sermon. My text was Phil. ii. 22." He gives the plan of his sermon: "I. The excellency of the gospel. II. The service of the gospel. III. The proof of Timothy—his pious parents; his education, conviction, conversion, call, and ordination; his ministry; his obedience as a son with a father—in mutual love, in mutual confidence, and mutual services: I showed the excellency of patriarchal or family government in the Church. I paralleled John Lee's character with Timothy's, in his manner of living, labouring, and death."

twenty souls were brought to experience the pardoning mercy of God ; and the good work of grace continued to bless the Church many days after the Conference closed. In the preaching that contributed to this blessed result, Mr. Lee, according to Bishop Asbury, performed an important part.

Mr. Lee was continued in the same official position he had occupied the preceding year, and he entered upon its duties with customary zeal and diligence. And not without great encouragement in the work : for while it was a year of almost unexampled prosperity to Methodism in America, it was also one of signal success in the district over which he presided. Many souls were made to rejoice in the pardon of sins, and in full assurance of faith. The following simple record of two meetings he attended, will serve at once to show his own singleness of heart in religious duty, and to illustrate the open-hearted simplicity that so beautifully adorns the religious fervour of the times. At a Quarterly Meeting at Mabry's Chapel, Greensville county, in June, there was a powerful "manifestation of the Spirit." "The place," says Mr. Lee, "was awful indeed. After awhile, one proclaimed aloud that God had converted her soul. Another spoke out and said, 'God had reached a young man's heart.' One of the Preachers called to one of the sisters, saying, 'Sister, your daughter has promised that she will set out for heaven.' Thus they continued for a considerable time." Again, at a Quarterly Meeting in Sussex, at Jones' Chapel, there was a more signal outpouring of the Spirit. Of the Sabbath, we have the following : "The meeting continued till sun-setting, in which time it was said sixteen souls were converted, including one or two who were converted the day before. The work was also among the blacks. About the going down of the sun, a young lad was converted, which was the last, there being but few people in the Meeting-House. One of the Preachers shouted aloud, and praised God that the Christians had taken the field, and kept the ground, for there was not a sinner left. \* Another Preacher asked some of them to look out of doors, and see if they could not find one more sinner, for he thought if they could find another, he would get converted. But there was not another unconverted sinner to be found at the Meeting-House. So they praised God together and returned home. Most of those who were converted,

were the children of Methodist parents, though some of their parents had been dead for many years. This was the best Quarterly Meeting I have had since I have been on the district." There was great fervour and strong faith in these exercises. But the one did not degenerate into fanaticism, nor the other swell into presumption. Infidelity might scoff at such an exhibition of religious zeal, and formalism scorn it as a manifestation of spiritual ignorance; but the well instructed in the Kingdom of God will regard it as an illustration of that "power of godliness" to which we are to cleave as a first law of Christianity, and fundamental of all our realizations of the assurance of faith, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Religious principle is changeless, and there is the same Spirit; "but there is a diversity of administrations;" and all these worketh that self-same Spirit. The manifestations of spiritual power are not always the same, even in the same age and among the same people. There are diversities of gifts, and grace has a thousand modes of development. These may depend upon individual temperament and peculiarities, social customs and habits, and the general intelligence and refinements of the age. Morbid sensibility of feeling, perverted taste, and corrupt inclinations controlled by defective judgment or bad education, may despise and deride them all. But they are not therefore wrong and reprehensible. What fair and faultless specimen of pure religion has the enmity of the carnal mind permitted to pass uncensured or uncondemned? If it had been possible, "the natural man" would long since have stripped the tree of life of its last leaf, and left it without foliage for shelter, or fruit to refresh and preserve. God's ways are higher and holier than ours; and the seeming extravagances of the times we are writing of, and even of the meeting we are considering, may be vindicated upon grounds more solid and scriptural than pretensions put forth as the perfection of religious excellence in the present day. What shall we say of the marvellous effects now ascribed to "the Sign of the Cross," and of the claims by which it is urged upon the Christian mind of the age, as a most devout and holy duty, by a party of grave and intelligent divines of the Church of England? One of them sings its virtues in the following strain of poetic fervour:

" Whene'er across this sinful breast of mine  
 I draw the HOLY SIGN,  
 All good thoughts stir within me, and collect  
 Their slumbering strength divine;  
 Till there springs up that hope of God's elect,  
 My faith shall ne'er be wrecked.  
 And who shall say, but hateful spirits around,  
 For their brief hour unbound,  
 Shudder to see, and wail their overthrow!  
 While on far heathen ground  
 Some lonely Saint hails the fresh odour, though  
 Its source he cannot know." \*

The sentiment of these lines is as undisguised, as its language is chaste and appropriate to its object. The *sign* itself is declared to be *holy*; and supernatural effects are attributed directly to—a cross mark upon the breast! It stirs "all good thoughts," however long or soundly they may have been slumbering. It gives to pious hope the assurance of final salvation in heaven. It sends a thrill of horror through the breasts of all the devils in the vicinity of its performance, and extorts groans, "not loud, but deep" in anticipation of their "overthrow." And, marvel greatest and most confounding of all, it sends "fresh odour" to regale the nostrils of "some lonely saint" "on *far* heathen ground," leaving him, however, profoundly mystified as to "whence it came, and whither it goeth!" In the presence of the Bible, so extensively circulated in the present day, after protesting against the introduction of such a superstition into the Churches of Protestant Christendom, we may safely leave such theology to the pity of well informed Christians, and to the consummation of its own folly in the breasts of those who "seek after a sign." But in comparison with such a foundation on which to rest the assurance of faith, how purer and more substantial are the exercises which brought souls to Christ on the occasion recorded by Mr. Lee; and how certainly are they more accordant with the terms and principles of the gospel of Christ! The one is solid rock; the other, shifting sand or yielding water.

In a revival of pure religion, Mr. Lee was always in an element congenial with his feelings, and with the great object of his life and labours. Happily for his godly edifying, the year of his life we

\* *Lyra Apostolica*, p. 14, English edition.

are reviewing was replete with this kind of toil and consolation. And not only in his own district, but generally through the Conference, there were times of refreshing. The Church was edified—and multiplied; not only by the accession of members to her communion, but by an increase of all spiritual gifts and graces. At the Conference at Dromgoole's Chapel, on the 1st of March, 1803, it was ascertained that one thousand souls had been added to the number of them that believed, within the limits of its jurisdiction. Nor were other portions of the Church either "barren or unfruitful" in the service of Christ, and the saving of souls. The labours of the year had been crowned with an abundant harvest: 13,860 persons had been added to the fellowship of Methodism. And Mr. Lee records it as the most prosperous year, all things considered, and especially for the numerous and valuable additions to the ministry, the Church had witnessed since its existence in America.

The year 1803 is remarkable in the history of Methodism in Virginia, for the introduction of Camp-Meetings. These meetings originated in the Western States, and may be traced to the necessities of a sparsely populated country, with only occasional opportunities of enjoying the divinely instituted means of grace. Under these circumstances, meetings to satisfy the necessities of large districts were held in the woods, and those coming from a distance would, in the nature of the case, bring both food and the means of shelter and comfort. So successful were these meetings in the production and extension of revivals of religion, that these accidental assemblies were substituted by regular appointments, and continued services day and night. A more full and perfect account of the origin and history of these meetings, may be found in other works.\* Our object is briefly to notice their introduction into Virginia, and their connexion with the history of Mr. Lee. Of the first meeting of the kind he ever attended, he gives the subjoined condensed account: "We had about 2500 or 3000 hearers on the Sabbath, and as many white people on Monday, but not so many blacks. We had many sermons during the meeting; sometimes we had preaching at both stands at the same time. Twenty-nine ministers were present. According to the best account I could get, about

\* Bange's Hist. M. E. Church, vol. ii. pp. 101-118.

thirty-five souls were converted ; the most of them were white people. Many had objections to the meeting before it came on, but those who attended it were generally pleased, and very desirous of having another. I have seen no meeting in this part of the world for years, that was so pleasing and profitable to me."

In a few weeks, he visited another of these meetings within his district. It was held in Brunswick county, as was also the preceding ; and was more remarkable than the former, both for the number of attendants, and the greater success that crowned the faithful preaching of the gospel. " Every discourse, and every exhortation given during the meeting, was attended by displays of Divine power. Almost every hour and every minute was employed in the worship of God. A little time was spent in seeking refreshment, and in necessary repose, but each endeavoured to improve his time to the best advantage, and seemed satisfied only with the hidden manna of God's love, and the living streams of His grace. More than a hundred living witnesses for Jesus were raised up at this meeting." In his History, Mr. Lee attributes many of the great and powerful revivals of religion, with which the Church was blessed in 1803, to the instrumentality of camp-meetings, which were now becoming common, and were in every case attended with distinguished success. In these meetings there was unity and co-operation among Christians of different denominations, especially among the Presbyterians and Methodists ; to the former of whom their origin is to be distinctly and creditably ascribed. As a legitimate result of these gracious and general revivals, we find a great accession to the membership of the Church. It was the most fruitful year Methodism had yet realized in the United States. The Church was never more devoted to the cause of Christ ; never more closely united in the bonds of peace. A most delightful harmony everywhere prevailed : Jesus *saw* " the travail of his soul, and was satisfied ;" and God, out of the holy place, looked upon the work and said it was good. In summing up the labours of the year, it was found that Methodism had added to its communion, as its share of the general triumph, 17,336 members.

The Virginia Conference for 1804, was held at Salem Meeting-House, in Mecklenburg county. One fruit of the revivals already noticed, is apparent in the proceedings of this Conference—great

harmony in business, and an addition of *fifteen* to the number of those actively employed in preaching "glad tidings of good things" through Christ Jesus the Lord. "We have added," says Bishop Asbury, "after a great mortality, one thousand members to the Virginia Conference bounds." We learn, from the same authority, that, owing to the pressure of business, and the want of time, "the Preachers' experiences, the state of the work, and the circuits, were not given." This led to the adoption of a resolution, recommending the approaching General Conference to authorize each Annual Conference to extend its session for one week, if necessary, for the completion of its business. Previously the Bishop had control of the time of the session, and could close it at pleasure, or to suit his own convenience. The recommendation was adopted, and a rule framed in accordance with it. In conclusion of this Conference, Mr. Lee was appointed to Williamsburg circuit. He, however, only had time to reach it, and enter upon the preparatory duties of the year, when he was called to the session of the General Conference, which commenced in the city of Baltimore, May the 6th, 1804.

The composition of this General Conference will show, what had been long felt, and as we shall yet see was once proposed by Mr. Lee, the importance of a change in the mode of constituting this supreme judicatory of the Church. It consisted of one hundred and eight members, representing seven Annual Conferences; but the representation of the remoter bodies, when compared with that of those near at hand, scarcely deserves the name. The assembly was thus apportioned between the Conferences:

Western Conference,	3
South Carolina do.	5
New England do.	4
New York do.	12
Virginia do.	17
Baltimore do.	30
Philadelphia do.	37

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Total, . . . . . 108\*

\* Dr. Bangs, History, vol. ii. p. 151, says one hundred and seven. But he only allows twenty-nine for Baltimore. Mr. Lee gives thirty. He also informs

From this tabular statement it appears there was a very great, and under possible circumstances, a very dangerous disproportion between the representations of the different Conferences. Thus, Baltimore and Philadelphia had nearly two-thirds of the whole body; while the remaining five Conferences had but little more than one-third; a preponderance not always safe, even in the hands of good men. We are not aware that this power of two Conferences to govern the whole body was employed; but the fact was noticed, and, according to Mr. Lee, the necessity of a different arrangement was felt, and an alteration attempted. But the time was not come. Both of the preceding Conferences were numerically stronger than the one we are reviewing. But in point of ministerial talent and experience, this was regarded as superior. Heretofore ministers of two years' standing were allowed to sit as members, but now four years in the itinerancy were required to entitle to a seat. This has since, under the delegated General Conference, become the law of the Church.

As at former sessions of this body, so at this, it was attempted to "stand on the shoulders" of their predecessors, and carry the system of Ecclesiastical economy as near to perfection as was possible to their circumstances, and the state of their experience. To this end they proceeded to read, revise, alter, and correct, in consecutive order, the entire spiritual and temporal laws and regulations of the Church. We may not follow them through this difficult and perplexing labour, nor will we attempt to present even the general results of the session in this department of its duties. A few of the more prominent measures perfected by them, and which still remain, is all that our limits will allow.

A feature of our system, in which it differs from the parent stock in England, and which distinguishes it from all others, is the regulation prohibiting, except under peculiar and clearly defined exceptions, the continuance of our ministers for more than two consecutive years, in the same field of labour. Previously they were, occasionally at least, continued in some appointments for three years.

us one hundred and twelve took their seats, but by vote of the body ~~five~~ were declared not to be legally entitled to seats, which reduced the number as above stated. It is believed the illegality consisted in not having travelled "four full calendar years." This at the time was the law of the Church.



In the absence of specific rules to the contrary, there were, under cover of an itinerant plan of the ministry, just and general objections to this practice. A plan more simple and better adapted to "equalize the privileges and toils of an itinerant ministry," was desired. Besides, it was breeding discontent and opening the way for innovation. Wealthy Societies were unwilling to give up popular ministers, and popular ministers were becoming reluctant to leave influential and wealthy communities. Ease and self-indulgence were in conflict with toil and self-denial. There were cases in point, and they were embarrassing to the Episcopal administration. One of these is mentioned by a survivor of the General Conference of 1804;\* and it is alleged that the minister referred to, availing himself of the popular current in his favour to continue in his appointment, was busily preparing to enter the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church." Mr. Asbury was much afflicted by this and similar cases within his field of labour." And in conversation, the propriety of a rule to meet such cases, was suggested:

"So you would limit the stationing power?" pleasantly inquired the Bishop.

"Nay, we would give strength and energy to the stationing power," it was replied.

At the next General Conference, the subject was introduced, and a rule, as it now stands, was incorporated in the Discipline. The measure met with strong opposition at first, in the Conference; but it had strong friends in George Dougherty and Jesse Lee, and it passed. It is believed to have been generally good in its practical results.

It has ever been one of the distinguishing and prominent doctrines of Methodism, that "we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will." An effort, the offspring of ignorance, but without any desire to change or modify the doctrine of the article, was made during the session, to alter the phraseology of this fun-

\* Rev. Aaron Hunt. See letter in *Christian Advocate and Journal*, under date of "March 3, 1844."

damental feature of our religious creed. A member, not having the fear or the knowledge of *latin* before his eyes, gravely offered a resolution to substitute *assisting* for "preventing," in the language of the eighth article. We do not know that the proposition had a second, but it certainly met with very little favour; and received the decided and strong opposition of many, especially of Dr. Coke. Tradition affirms that its introduction took the Doctor so entirely by surprise, that, with his shrill, piercing voice, he cried out, "The Brother's a fool!" But, whether tradition be right or wrong in this matter, history informs us he, with great show of learning and strong powers of reasoning, maintained both the propriety of the language and the integrity of the article, as an exponent of our doctrinal belief, and as an essential element of all sound and saving experience of the true grace of God. "The grace of God by Christ *assisting* us" is, in its appropriate position in the religious system, "a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." But, as a substitute for the precise language of the article, it neither magnifies "the grace of God," in originating "a good will" in us, nor meets the necessities of our fallen nature, in its utter destitution of that "good will," and its entire dependence upon God for its production, perfection, and permanence. In the absence of the term employed in the article, and the standard of doctrine it erects and maintains, we might be justly chargeable with holding and teaching the absurd and heretical doctrines of "the merit of good works," and "the moral ability of man" to perform "all the deeds of the law." But, apart from that great central truth of our doctrinal system—justification by faith alone—our articles take especial pains to confute both of these heresies, and deny to each of them a solitary particle of ground whereon to place the sole of its foot. In the truth of this doctrine, that God gives us "a good will," and "works with us, when we have that good will," we are equally removed from "the high mystery of predestination," and the "vain talk" of the self-conceited Pelagian. Indeed, we are between the two, calmly and confidently within the shadow of the cross.

Heretofore the publishing business of the Church had been conducted in Philadelphia. Of its condition, and the extent of its business transactions, we know very little. Its catalogue of books

was limited, but excellent; and there was a very commendable zeal manifested in their circulation. It was unquestionably prosperous, and rapidly growing into importance. In the absence of other evidence of these things, it is enough to know the Conference determined to transfer the establishment to New York; and after reappointing the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, who had occupied the post since the death of Mr. Dickens, to the superintendency of its affairs, they also gave him a colleague, the Rev. J. Wilson, to assist in its management. We perceive in these things signs of prosperity; and its subsequent history, if written out, would furnish a lucid exhibition of the process by which, in trade as in religion, "a little one becomes a thousand; and a small one, a great nation." The importance of this establishment, as an auxiliary to Methodism in its noble efforts to spread scriptural holiness in the earth, can never be too highly, or even fully estimated. It has gathered a great multitude of matured intellects and ripened spirits for the harvests of earth, and the triumphs of heaven.

Many other matters of historical interest were enacted at this Conference; but they are so fully presented in other works on Methodism, that we may safely omit them here. In concluding our notice of it, we may introduce Mr. Lee in a character more congenial with his feelings than the press of business and the strife of debate; although in these, as in other things, he met all his responsibilities, and cheerfully filled up the measure of his duties:—There was little or no religious quickening during the session. This was a grief and a trouble to his righteous soul. He thought, and he was probably correct, he saw a cause for this in the fact, that, departing from its former course, the Conference had thrown open its doors to the people; and they preferred rather to listen to the debates of the body, than to hear words of life and salvation in the Church. And so marked was this preference, and possibly it was deemed so injurious, that, after a few days, the doors were closed, and the old plan resumed. On the whole, it was a barren season; no seed of the Word of God sprung up in newness of life; and no fruit unto holiness was gathered; and he mourned over the "barrenness" of the meeting, with a true sincerity of sorrow.

But the religious dearth of the Conference was not characteristic

of the condition of the Church. On other fields she was "thrusting in the sickle, for the harvest was ripe." Revivals were frequent, and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. Methodism was filling its old grounds with the beauty of holiness; and, keeping pace with the tread of the emigrant in the wilds of the west, it preached to him there, in the rude cabin, in the forest shade, and by the way-side, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," as the Saviour of them that trust in Him. These pioneers of religion have made that land to rejoice and blossom as the rose; and their names deserve to be enrolled high up on the brightest escutcheon of its fame.

## CHAPTER XI.

## FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1804, TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1808.

Christian Activity—Lunatic Asylum at Williamsburg—A great Camp-Meeting—Conference in North Carolina—Mecklenburg Circuit—Authorship of Mr. Lee—State of Printing—Attends Conference in Norfolk—A Revival—Amelia Circuit—A Case of Suffering—Strange Scenes at a Camp-Meeting—Presbyterian Extravagance—A Trance—Reflections—Death of Bishop Whatcoat—Mr. Lee's Tribute to his Memory—Official Testimonial of his Excellence—Conference in Newbern—Mr. Lee defeats a Measure for holding an Extra General Conference—Revisits the South—Forms the first Society in Savannah—Last Visit to the Orphan House—Travels in Georgia—Prayer in the Woods of Florida—Virginia Conference in Lynchburg—Measures for a Delegated General Conference—Anecdotes—Cumberland Circuit—Scene at Home—General Conference of 1808—Absence of Dr. Coke—Proceedings in his Case—His Letter to Bishop White condemned, and justly—Election of a Bishop—Provision for a Delegated General Conference—Mr. Lee's early Movement upon this Subject—Committee's Report—Restrictive Regulations defeated by Mr. Lee—Reconsidered, reported, and adopted—Anecdote—Presiding Elder Question—Section on Slavery left out of the Discipline—Reflections.

INACTIVITY is incompatible with Christianity. It formed no part of the character of those holy men whose names are inscribed so illustriously upon the bright pages of our early Church history. The requirement—"never be unemployed; never be triflingly employed,"—was a rule of life to the fathers of Methodism. They were truly wayfaring men: here to-day, gone to-morrow; but always and everywhere toiling, with a most self-consuming care and zeal "to do good, and to communicate" to old and young, "the comfort wherewith they themselves were comforted of God." In the front rank of these mighty men of old, Mr. Lee occupied a noble position. He was always busy. The idea of *rusting* out—of passing through life, and going down to the grave, without leaving a mark upon society for usefulness and glory, was a horror to him. His motto, and his life attested its pertinency, was:—"Let me *wear* out in the service of souls, rather than *rust* out in sloth

and self-indulgence." He lived up to the fullest measure of duty this rule could impose upon him; and, what to a slothful man would seem the greatest mystery of such a life, he found his supreme happiness in devotion to duties that exacted all his time, and gave exercise to all his faculties of "soul, body, and spirit." In the highest and holiest sense of the term, "he was not his own: he had been bought with the precious blood of Christ;" and therefore he would, to the utmost of his power, "glorify Christ in his body and spirit, which were His." And faithfully and truly did he strive to give the fullest proof of this self-consecration. His circuit would furnish an ample field for the employment of his energies in the service of Christ.

Leaving Baltimore after the General Conference, Mr. Lee returned to his circuit.\* Superadded to his regular ministerial engagements, he employed some portion of his time in preparing the Life of his brother for the press. This work was published about the close of the following year. Very little can be said of the literary excellency of this small work; yet, as a record of simple faith, earnest zeal to save souls, and eminent success in a brief, devoted, and effectual ministry, it is not without merit and interest. In the preceding chapter, we have given a comprehensive summary of the life and death of this devoted servant of God. His record is on high; and, though dead, in the narrative of his faithful labours, his warm-hearted and cheerful piety, his patience in suffering, and his triumph in death, he yet speaketh words of encouragement and comfort to such as are striving, even through much tribulation, to enter into the Kingdom of God. Soon after his return to the circuit, Mr. Lee preached in Williamsburg, and, as was his custom of taking observations of every subject of interest within his reach, visited the Lunatic Asylum in the place. His record of this visit, aside from his remarks respecting it, will serve to show the condition of an Institution still existing, and greatly improved in all the facilities for promoting the comfort of a most unfortunate class of human beings. Then, as now, it is an

\* The Rev. M. Thrift, in his Memoirs, places Mr. Lee on Williamsburg circuit. The Minutes for the year put him in Petersburg. It is probable he spent, by appointment, six months in each.

honour to the state, and an incalculable blessing to society. He writes :

“After preaching and meeting the class, I went with a few friends to the hospital for lunatics; at which place twenty-nine persons were confined. I saw most of them. Some were in the yard, some in their rooms, and some closely confined in their cells. I was much pleased to find everything so neat and cleanly in their apartments. None of those I saw were violent or outrageous; some walked about in pensive dejection, and others were cheerful and merry, but at times would show marks of insanity. I saw one woman reading her Bible in the German language. I spoke to her in German, and she seemed pleased, and began to converse freely and sensibly. While I stayed I saw no evidence of melancholy or violence in her, although I understood she had frequent fits of insanity.”

The Asylum has vastly improved in the capacity of its accommodations, the nature of its internal government, and in the mode of treatment pursued towards its patients. Of the many (in 1847, one hundred and sixty) subjects now under treatment there, nearly all of them attend religious worship on the Sabbath; and with only an occasional exception, deport themselves with the utmost gravity of decorum. Moral means, with kind and gentle treatment, are brought to bear with all the impressiveness of their united influence upon a malady more to be pitied and deplored, than any other with which humanity is afflicted. A lunatic asylum is one of the greatest trophies of the active and manifested benevolence of Christianity. It is monumental of charity—the first-born and fairest offspring of pure religion.

Whether the conjecture advanced in the preceding note be correct or not, it is quite certain Mr. Lee did not remain on this circuit during the year. In July, his health having partially failed, he visited the Sweet Springs, in the county of Greenbriar, Virginia. On his way thither he spent a few days at his father's; and also attended a camp-meeting in the Amelia circuit. In each of these he found means and opportunities of “making full proof of his ministry,” and thereby adding glory to the Redeemer of men, and also to his own joy of doing good. He returned from the Springs in October, and finding the Rev. D. Hall too unwell to attend to the duties of the district, he consented, during his indisposition, to

supply his place. In this labour, and in the pastoral oversight of the Society in Petersburg, he filled up his time until the close of the Ecclesiastical year. On this district, and about the period now before us, a camp-meeting was held in the vicinity of Suffolk, the fame and effects of which have extended down to the present times. Mr. Hall presided over the meeting, and from its commencement to its close it was attended by the most signal and gracious manifestations of spiritual power. Within the four days of its continuance, nearly *four hundred persons* were brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free, and with thankful hearts returned to their homes, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and rejoicing in hope of eternal life. This was, perhaps, the most successful meeting of the kind ever yet held. Mr. Lee, in noticing it, says, "The accounts from the meeting appear to be incredible to those who were not present; but those who were eye and ear-witnesses, think it to be too great to be sufficiently described." The memory of that meeting is still cherished, "as ointment poured forth," in the hearts of the descendants of those who then first learned to live, and lived, even down to the grave, in the ever accumulating strength of their first love. Other meetings, not powerful as this, but full of interest, and of great benefit to the Church of Christ, were also held in different parts of the Conference; and contributed, each in its measure, to augment the success with which God so mercifully vouchsafed to visit and crown the laborious diligence of his servants.

From scenes like these, and full of their spirit, the ministers went up to their Annual Meeting. The Conference was held at Edmund Taylor's, Granville county, North Carolina, on the first of March, 1805, and continued in session one week. It was a gathering of holy men. And the High and Holy One, in whose name they assembled, met with them, and breathed His blessing upon them. Fourteen candidates for the ministry were received on trial, four located, none had died, or proved unfaithful; and all seemed to be living in daily preparation for "the time of their departure." The year had been a most successful one. From nearly every pastoral field the good tidings of a gracious revival of religion came up to encourage and edify the body. On summing up the result of the year's work in accessions to the Church,



it was found that nineteen hundred had been added to the number of them that believe.\* This was a blessed result of the labours of the Conference. The Virginia Conference at this time was composed of four districts,† thirty-three appointments, and fifty ministers, and a membership, including the increase of the year, of 14,247 whites, and 3,573 coloured. The increase, if we may so compute it, would give an average of 490 to each district, 57 to each circuit and station, and 38 to each minister. Such success would be a matter of devout rejoicing to every true minister of Jesus Christ. And yet, in every just and sober view of the subject, it is surprising that a much greater average is not found to be the annual result of ministerial labour. His calling is to *save* souls. In a just and proper sense all the provisions and appliances of the gospel are subject to him, and available for this very purpose. What then doth hinder success? This question is full of interest. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. If it brings no salvation through our preaching of it, may we not properly seek for the cause? Can a minister of Jesus Christ be satisfied and happy without success in saving souls? Is not *ease*, under such circumstances, reprehensible? and *contentment* a crime against that love of God in Christ, which would "have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth?"

The field of labour assigned to Mr. Lee for the year 1805, was Mecklenburg circuit. And yet he did not enter upon his work until the 9th of the ensuing November. This fact, considering the zeal which he always evinced in his work, is as singular, as the circumstances that caused it will, in the present condition of literature, seem to be novel and extraordinary. He had completed the Life of his brother; and must needs go north to publish it. And it will serve to show the condition of "the art of printing"

\* Mr. Thrift, and Bishop Asbury, each give this as the number added to the Church. The Annual Minutes, however, show a decrease of 184, coloured, and an increase of 865, whites; a total or nett increase of only 681. There must be a mistake in the printed Minutes.

† Salisbury and Newbern, in North Carolina; and Norfolk and Richmond, in Virginia. These bounds now comprise two Conferences, eleven districts, one hundred and fifteen circuits and stations, one hundred and seventy-two effective ministers, and 58,654 members.

books, when it is stated he was occupied from the early spring until late in autumn, in bringing through the press a small volume of one hundred and eighty pages; and in size no larger than the ordinary book of Discipline as now published by the Church. In the present state of printing, it is a marvel and a mystery that so much time could be employed in doing so small an amount of work. As the most of the volume is composed of extracts from his brother's Journal, and as there is a very frequent use of the personal pronoun, first person, singular number, it may have been on this occasion, and it will also illustrate the state of the art, that Mr. Lee dryly remarked of the office, that he had "put out all the printer's I's." The scarcity of this letter may have to bear some of the responsibility of so great a consumption of time.

How, during this long absence from his appropriate work, Mr. Lee employed his time, beyond the supervision of the press, we are not informed;\* nor even of the nature of his labours, aside from ordinary circuit engagements, after his return. Of course, under such circumstances, we could not anticipate success in doing good among his flock, and should feel sorrow, unmixed with surprise, however, to find much of evil existing among them. Any amount of good, or the presence of only a very small amount of evil, would, no doubt, have furnished him an occasion of grateful joy on his return. Although he could not recover the time lost from his appropriate field of toil, yet he might, and did, improve each passing moment, and every opportunity to make everything straight, and to "strengthen the things that remained, and that (perhaps) were ready to die." While, therefore, when he took his place in Conference, others were reporting their success in the great work of filling the Church of God with precious stones, until the nett addition amounted to 2425, he was shut up to the humiliation and sorrow of exhibiting a decrease of five white, and one coloured person. He might have thanked God that it was no worse.

The Conference for 1806 was held in Norfolk, on the 14th of February. The year just closed had been a very successful one.

\* We only know he attended a camp-meeting at Duck Creek Cross Roads, in Delaware. In his History, p. 306, he gives a very interesting account of this meeting. Sixty-eight ministers were present, and more than two hundred souls were converted.

There had been a clear gain to the Church of 1450 white, and 975 coloured members. And from the fields whereon these mighty works had been accomplished, *fourteen* young men had come up to consecrate themselves to God in the holy work of the ministry. There was also a good work of grace in Norfolk and Portsmouth, during the Conference. In the former place, the revival commenced under a sermon preached by the Rev. P. Bruce, on 1 Cor. i. 18; and in the latter, it seems to have begun, or been powerfully augmented, under a sermon of Mr. Lee, from Amos ii. 7. During the Conference, in the two places, eighty souls were happily saved from the error of their ways, and brought into the blessedness of being justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Of one item of the business transacted at this Conference, Bishop Asbury gives us the following curious account: "One member opposed all petitions from the people for Conference sittings. He also condemned all epistles from sister Conferences, as being too long and pompous, and as likely to make innovations. He dictated an epistle himself, by way of example, to show how epistles ought to be written. The Committee of Addresses wrote one, too; but it was rejected, as being too much like that of the objecting member, whose epistle was rejected as being too much like himself. The Conference voted that none should be sent. Strange," says the Bishop, "that such an affair should occupy the time of so many good men! Religion will do great things; but it does not make Solomons." This extract will show, what the reader of his Journal will be at no loss to discover, that, with all his gravity of character, Bishop Asbury had a very strong sense, as well as a clear perception, of the ridiculous.

At the close of Conference, Mr. Lee was appointed to the Amelia circuit, and he soon entered upon the performance of his duties. His Journal is replete with notices of good meetings, and cheering success in the great work to which his heart was so strongly wedded. A few incidents, however, selected from an inviting and well furnished storehouse, is all that our limits will allow. He was now in the forty-ninth year of his age; and it was a subject of sober reflection that he had entered "the sere and yellow leaf" of life. Gray hairs were on his head, and his eyes were growing dim. Yet he was upborne by the hope that, as he "advanced in life, he was also

growing in grace." If he was even tempted to repine at these indications of age and feebleness when the strong man is brought low, we may well suppose he was relieved and comforted by a contrast with which he became acquainted in one of his pastoral visits. At one of his preaching-places, after mentioning "a happy little meeting," he records the following account of the affliction of the head of the family: "It had been twenty-one years since he was on his feet. He is perfectly stiff, from his head to his feet. He can move his toes, has a tolerably good use of one arm, and can use the other a little, but cannot raise it to his head. He has the use of all his senses, but cannot move his head in any direction. He lies on his back continually, and has no power to change his posture, or to rest a weary limb. However, he has a hickory withe suspended over his bed; and, by taking hold of it, he can raise himself, and find a little relief and rest. He reads, sings, talks, and shouts the praise of God with great solemnity." Indeed, he was a devout and rejoicing Christian. How mighty is faith; and how sovereign a balm for all our woes, is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! In the long years of this severe affliction, how blissful must have been the anticipation of the ceaseless and unrestrained freedom of the city of God! Who could think of age, and decline of vision, in the presence of these master manifestations of "suffering affliction and patience?" The pastor had sorrow and sympathy for his member; but, in the greater griefs of his brother, he forgot his own.

In May, a camp-meeting was held at Olive Branch, in Brunswick. It was well attended, and successful in the conversion of souls; it was, however, in the judgment of Mr. Lee, injured in its fruitfulness of good, by a cause that we must allow him to relate in his own words:

"One circumstance contributed not a little to interrupt the harmony of the meeting, and retard the progress of the work, which was the wild enthusiasm displayed by a certain female not a member of our Church. Her exercises were such as to attract the attention of all present, and were of a character novel enough to do so; for she exhibited at some times the *jerking* exercise, at other times the dancing exercise, and not unfrequently the basking

exercise; and taking them altogether, made as ridiculous a set of exercises as ever attracted the gaze of a multitude."

The language of the narrative will show the opposition of Mr. Lee to all such extravagances in the worship of God. To a full, responsible amen, a swelling shout of praise, or a burst of deep and strong emotion, he interposed no objection; indeed, he could sympathize with and unite in such manifestations of religious feeling. But he could not tolerate such improprieties as were exhibited on this occasion; and he attempted its correction then, and its prevention for the future. The fact that the individual was "not a member of our Church," will authorize the remark, and a multitude of other facts will plead its justification, that in times of revival the Methodists are often censured for extravagances committed under precisely the same circumstances, in this respect, with the one mentioned in the text. Indeed, in the period we are now examining, these *exercises*, as they were called, especially the "jerking," and "dancing," we cannot comprehend the *basking*, exercise, were more common among the Baptists and Presbyterians, than the Methodists. The original records of these times will show frequent complainings on the part of our ministers on this very subject. We have given one; here is another, in a letter from the Rev. Joseph Moore to the subject of these memoirs. It is a more singular and offensive picture than the one drawn by Mr. Lee, and what is perhaps the most humiliating view of the whole matter is, that its truth is beyond question. The original letter is now in our possession.

"MAY 16th, 1806.

"Some of the Presbyterians got into some extremes, and brought a reproach upon the good work. They got into what they called the dancing exercise, marrying exercise, &c. Sometimes a whole set of them would get together and begin dancing about at a most extravagant rate. Sometimes they would be exercised about getting married, and one would tell another he or she had a particular revelation that they must be married; and if the one thus addressed did not consent, he or she must expect to be damned.

"Thus many got married, and it was said some old maids who had nearly gotten antiquated, managed in this way to get husbands.

"But this was condemned by the more sober part among Presbyterians and Methodists, and it has now nearly subsided."

This is a sad picture. Whether the "*and so forth*" of Mr. Moore comprehended anything as bad or worse than these "exercises," we need not stay to inquire. The mere recital is sufficiently revolting without any embellishment; and yet the truth of history, especially as it is designed to teach us the way to perfection in self-government, demanded the exposition. There can be no doubt of the correctness of this statement; and the only drawback to the interest of the warning it conveys, and perhaps that is not really to be regretted, is the fact, that the letter gives no "local habitation" to the scenes it describes. In 1805, Mr. Moore travelled the Amelia circuit, now filled by Mr. Lee. At the Conference of 1806, he located. Where he settled, and of what locality he wrote, we know not. But of the genuineness of his letter, and the truth of his statements, there is no reasonable room for doubt.

As a fact in the history of these times, it may be stated, upon the authority of Mr. Lee,\* that at two camp-meetings held during this year, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and Virginia, upwards of two thousand souls professed to find "the pearl of great price." The first of these meetings continued five days; and resulted, according to ministers present, and after great efforts to ascertain the correct number, in the conversion of one thousand souls. And at the second meeting, even a greater number professed conversion! Revivals of great power, and productive of great good to the Church, were characteristic of this year, and make it in many respects to be gratefully remembered.

There are marvels in religious history and experience, which philosophy cannot explain, and for which, beyond the mere reference to supernatural influence, the gospel furnishes no solution. In a popular sense, "the age of miracles is past;" but facts are constantly occurring to confound all established experience, and put our boasted reasoning powers at fault. Even faith treads softly amidst these religious phenomena, dreading to believe too much, and fearing to believe too little. A case full of marvel, and not without interest to those fond of investigating the laws of our intellectual and physical constitution, especially as they are adapted to, and under the influence of our spiritual nature, is recorded by Mr.

\* Hist. Methodists, pp. 311-12.

Lee. Wishing the case to stand just as it appeared to him, we present it in his own simple, but accurate language:

"The case of a young woman, N—— W——, being very singular, I will here set down some account of it. At this meeting\* on Sunday night, she fell down, and lay helpless; they took her into a tent, and set up with her all night; she continued helpless and speechless, all the time. Next morning I had a teaspoonful of water given her. About nine o'clock in the forenoon she revived, and said, Love, love, love! Glory, glory, glory! and then died away again, and appeared like a person in a sweet sleep. In the afternoon she was taken home in a wagon, but remained as she had been before. Her parents, fearing that there might be some bodily complaint attending her, sent for a physician, who came, and then sent for another. The physicians both agreed, that they could not perceive that she had any bodily complaint, believing it to be a supernatural power. They did not attempt to do much for her, only took a little blood, gave a few reviving drops, and put a small blister on the back part of her neck, but took it off in a little time. One of the physicians continued with her until the following Sunday, but saw very little alteration. She continued thus until Tuesday night, at which time she revived, and spoke freely and sensibly, though apparently in a weak and feeble state. The next day she went about the house, and out of doors, just as she pleased, and was quite well and happy in God. She had been in that state from Sunday night, until the next Tuesday night week, which was nine days and nights. I understood that during that time, she ate nothing except such things as were poured into her mouth, and she took but very little of that. She was, for the most part of the time, sensible of everything that was said or done to her in her presence. For some days before she revived, she knew all her friends that came to see her, and would answer any question by a nod or shake of the head, and in some cases would hold out her hand to a friend; when spoken to about the state of her soul, and asked if she was happy, she would move her head by way of assent, and raise her eyes, and the tears would flow down her cheeks, which satisfied

\* A camp-meeting at Hobbs's Meeting-House, Brunswick county, Va., October 10th, 1806.

her friends that she was converted. After she regained her strength, she said that the Lord blessed and converted her soul on the Monday after she was struck down, at which time she spoke, and shouted, Love! love! love! glory! glory! glory! I saw her soon after she recovered from this ecstasy, and took her into Society, and had no doubt but she was truly happy in God. Many people who visited her in her helpless condition, were deeply affected, and some of them were brought to think more seriously about their souls. Such a strange circumstance I do not remember to have known or read of before; and yet there was nothing like a trance, or any particular discovery of the other world professed by her."

Now by whatever method we may attempt to account for this occurrence, whether we trace it to natural or moral causes, to the suspension of nervous susceptibility, or directly to the overwhelming power of spiritual influence, in either case we are compelled to admit the existence of the fact, detailed as it is by an eye-witness. With the fact as the basis of our inquiries, we may safely leave those who prefer it, to empty speculations and unsatisfying conclusions. Our solution, ascribing it unquestionably to supernatural influence, is reached by a shorter path and a directer way. Taking all the parts of it together, we can conceive of nothing short of "the great power of God" to meet the demands of the case. Reposing upon that Power, every question may be answered, every difficulty solved.

In winding up the affairs of the circuit, preparatory to his departure for Conference, Mr. Lee enjoyed the consciousness of having filled the measure of his duty to the people of his pastoral care; and he left them at peace among themselves, active in works of piety, and progressing in knowledge and holiness. The year now closing had left on the heart of the Church a sad memorial of its course. Bishop Whatcoat, than whom, perhaps, a more excellent man never lived, had departed out of a land that is polluted, to "a good land," where sorrows do not come, and the sky is always bright. He closed his useful and holy life on the 5th of July, 1806, at the residence of Richard Bassett, Esq., Dover, Delaware, after intense suffering for thirteen weeks,—“a prodigy of pain and patience.” For the annexed condensed abstract of his life and character, we are indebted to Mr. Lee:



"Richard Whatcoat was born in Gloucestershire, England, in 1736. He became a Travelling Preacher in 1769, and for fifteen years travelled extensively through England and Ireland. He came to the United States in 1784; and at the Christmas Conference the same year, assisted at the consecration of Bishop Asbury to the Episcopal Office. He laboured in America thenceforth until his work was finished. In May 1800, he was elected Bishop of the M. E. Church, entered at once upon his Episcopal duties, and continued in them with accumulating usefulness until within a few weeks previous to his last illness.

"He was a pattern of piety and patience; his moderation was known unto all men. He was always serious and solemn, and seldom complained of any difficulties he met with. He was an excellent preacher, sound in doctrine, and clear and plain in his explanations of the Scriptures.

"He might be ranked as the best of men, for meekness and patience, humility and sobriety; for watchfulness over his words, and for a smooth and even temper; and, withal, for gifts and animation in preaching; especially in the latter part of his life. In his death the Preachers have lost a pattern of piety, and the people an able teacher."

This is no strained eulogy. It is the spontaneous tribute of respect and affection to exalted worth and real excellence of character. We record it with a sincere gratification, particularly as it exhibits Mr. Lee in a new and engaging aspect of character, as free from jealousy of one who "was preferred before" him; and as it confirms an opinion heretofore hinted at, that that preference left no feeling behind it that could find food in envy and uncharitableness. Indeed, if the feeling had ever betrayed a symptom of life, it would soon have perished in a heart from which malignity and selfishness had long since been expelled by sanctifying grace and perfect love.

We have seen an individual testimonial of the Bishop's character: it will not be out of place to insert here the voice of the Church respecting the high moral and official integrity of her departed Chief Pastor. After a comprehensive notice of his life and eminent public services, the official Memoir says: "We will not use many words to describe this almost inimitable man: So deeply serious! Who ever saw him trifling or light? Who ever heard him speak evil of any person? nay, who ever heard him speak an

idle word? Dead to envy, pride, and praise. Sober without sadness, cheerful without levity, careful without covetousness, and decent without pride. He died not possessed of property sufficient to have paid the expenses of his sickness and funeral, if a charge had been made; so dead was he to the world!" "In life and death, placid and calm; as he lived, so he died," in full assurance of a joyous and glorious immortality. Is not this the description of "a perfect man?" One fact will explain all these moral excellences:—for forty-five years he had professed to be sanctified; and his life and conversation had borne a united and unvarying testimony of his uprightness and purity, and of the possession of "that perfect love that casteth out all fear!" Such a life could not have ended otherwise than in quiet joy and holy delight. He lived in humility among men: he veils his face in the presence of the angels of God! Heaven must have felt a new rapture when he sat down among the Elders.

In February 1807, the Virginia Conference met, for the first time, in Newbern, North Carolina. About sixty Ministers were in attendance. The word was preached in faith and purity; and about "twenty whites, and as many blacks, were converted." During the year, there had been very general and powerful revivals of religion throughout the Conference; and, as a natural result, there was a considerable accession to the membership of the Church. Bishop Asbury puts down the number as 3159; and remarks: "These blessings on our labours pay all expenses, and reward all our toils in the midst of suffering." It was here Mr. Lee defeated a measure to hold a delegated General Conference in Baltimore, in 1807, for the purpose of electing an additional Bishop. It had been suggested, at the Baltimore Conference of 1806, and adopted by several others, previous to the death of Bishop Whatcoat; but in view of his rapidly failing health, and the consequently augmented duties of Bishop Asbury. It was a favourite measure of the Senior Bishop; and had been presented and adopted by all the Conferences except the Virginia. When the subject was first brought forward at the Baltimore Conference, its success was made to depend upon the united recommendations of all the Annual Conferences. Mr. Lee, for reasons which may be given when reviewing the General Conference of 1808, in its

measures to establish a delegated supreme judicatory of the Church, was decidedly opposed to this attempt to interfere with the prerogatives of the constitutional body, which would meet within the ensuing year; and, therefore, he resisted it with his utmost strength, and succeeded in carrying a majority against it. Its failure here settled its fate; and the Church fell back upon its chartered rights, and looked with hope, not unmingled with anxiety, to the regular session of its quadrennial Conference, to meet the emergency, now consummated in the death of the Bishop, the anticipation of which had occasioned an extreme act of legislation. "This defeat of a favourite project, so feasible in itself, and apparently so necessary to the prosperity of the Church and the perpetuity of her institutions, was a source of great grief to Bishop Asbury, as well as of regret to those who had concurred in his views."\* What was "*apparently* so necessary," in this measure, to the Bishop and its friends, was really unnecessary in the judgment of Mr. Lee; and, therefore, as honestly, and with as sincere a regard for the prosperity of the Church, &c., and without any wish or purpose to grieve any one, he met it with a manly and decided opposition; and it perished like an untimely birth.† It was, perhaps, in reference to this defeat, that the Journal of the Bishop, at the Virginia Conference, shows a seeming struggle between the desire to speak, and the determination to be silent; which was finally compromised by the utterance of the significantly ambiguous sentence, "much might be said!" though nothing was said: a decision that, considering the relation of the Bishop to the subject, and all the parties connected with it, furnishes another illustration of the good sense that forms so distinguishing a feature of his character.

\* Dr. Bangs, Hist. M. E. Church, vol. ii. pp. 177-8.

† In his History, p. 345, Mr. Lee makes the following remarks. "This plan was adopted by four of the Conferences, viz: New York, New England, the Western, and South Carolina Conferences; and delegates were accordingly chosen. But when it was proposed to the Virginia Conference, which met in Newbern, in February 1807, they refused to take it under consideration, and rejected it as being pointedly in opposition to all the rules of our Church. The Bishop laboured hard to carry the point, but he laboured in vain: and the whole business of that dangerous plan was overset by the Virginia Conference. The inventors and defenders of that project might have meant well; but they certainly erred in judgment."

Anxious to revisit scenes in the south, in which, as the companion and substitute of Bishop Asbury, he had spent some of his most toilsome years, Mr. Lee obtained permission of the Conference for this object; and on its adjournment, in company with the Rev. D. Hall, appointed to Columbia, S. C., he entered upon his journey. With authority to travel generally, his name, in connexion with those of James Russell, and J. Porter, stands on the Minutes for Sparta, Ga. It is presumable this was merely a nominal appointment. He spent a Sabbath in Charleston, and preached three times, and went from thence to Columbia, where he parted with his companion. Pursuing his course, he reached Savannah on the 13th of April; and on Sunday, the 19th, he formed a class, the first ever established in the place. We transcribe his own account of it. Having no place to preach in the morning of this day, he rode to White Bluff Meeting-House, seven miles from the city, and preached with "a good degree of liberty," on Acts xvii. 27. He returned immediately to town, and in the afternoon heard "a beautiful discourse, and with much life," delivered by the Rev. H. Kellock, of the Presbyterian Church, on 1 John v. 4."

"At night, at Mr. Myers', I preached on 1 Peter ii. 5. I had a crowded house, and more attended than could get in; many were forced to remain out of doors. I preached to them with some freedom, and they fed on the word with much apparent pleasure. All were solemn, and some were affected. It was a good time to many souls. After I dismissed the congregation I desired that all that had been Methodists in other places, and wished again to be in Society with us, to remain, and we would form a class. I took four of them into a class. There were others present, but I told them that I did not desire any person to join at that time but such as had been formerly in Society with us; and if any others wished to join, they might have an opportunity after a few meetings. This was the first class that was ever formed in Savannah. Who knows but the Lord will multiply his blessings upon us, and make us a great people in this place, as well as in other places? At present there is a good stir of religion in this town; other Churches have an increase of members."

As on former occasions, so now, Mr. Lee must needs visit Whitefield's Orphans' House; and we must be content to accompany

him. But the visit, if disagreeable to the reader, will have the compound merit of being brief and final. We shall accompany him thither no more. Leaving Savannah on the 25th, with two companions, and reaching the place, he "was surprised to find how it was changed for the worse" since his last visit. Most of the buildings had been burned, blank desolation reigned around, and decay was silently working its way to the vitals of the establishment. No school was kept on the premises, nor supported by the property of this once world-known and honoured institution. "I was sorry," he says, "to see how all the improvements had been demolished; and to think how many thousands of dollars had been wasted" here; "but what else could have been expected when the property was left to Lady Huntingdon, a woman who ought never to have had the government of the institution. The lady's likeness at full length, was in the house; that I believe was the only thing like furniture or ornament that remained, and even that was in a shattered condition." The truth is, Mr. Lee was, in the strictest sense of the term, a utilitarian,—something Whitefield never was—and the thoughtless expenditure of so much time and money as had been wasted here, and might have been so much more usefully employed, was a grief to him. He seems to have derived a mournful pleasure from these opportunities of deploring the good that might have been done under wiser plans and more auspicious circumstances. But grief could avail nothing in a case of this kind. Its sorrow was without hope. The destiny of the house was sealed. It was pressed with the misfortunes it was intended to relieve; and instead of the merry laugh and happy faces of orphan children gathered from the desolated hearths of their childhood's home, lank ruin revelled in its halls by day, and mournful sounds sighed the requiem of its fortunes in the silent watches of the night. Itself was in the very loneliness and desertion of orphanage.

Mr. Lee continued in Georgia until the close of the year. His Journals show he was "in labours abundant;" and there are very gratifying proofs of success. As in New England, so here he found opportunities of carrying the gospel to those who had it not. In revisiting places in which he had formerly preached, he mentions with a real pleasure the great and beneficial changes everywhere observable in the morals and habits of the people. His

remarks upon the country, its soil, productiveness, and capabilities of sustaining a large population, and of yielding great wealth to honest and careful industry, are replete with interest, and stand forth as predictions. We may not follow him through his daily toil and nightly rest. A few incidents must answer for all the rest. In one of his excursions to form a new field of labour, he spent a night with a family residing in an old fort, on the bank of St. Mary's River, erected to protect the frontier counties from the depredations of the Florida Indians. Florida was then a Spanish possession. In the afternoon, in a small boat, he crossed the river, went alone into the woods, knelt down, and most earnestly implored God to claim the land for His own, to send ministers to preach the gospel, and to bless the people with the riches of grace and salvation; and there he knelt till his head was damp with the dews of heaven; and when he recrossed the river, the pale star of evening mirrored in the dark waters of the quiet stream the calm and holy serenity of his happy and confiding heart. That prayer has long since been answered; and what was then a moral wilderness is now a garden full of fruits and beautiful with flowers. He attended a camp-meeting, near Sparta, at which about eighty souls were converted. There were, at this meeting, thirty-six ministers, one hundred and seventy-six tents, and about three thousand regular attendants of the word. In Milledgeville, during the prevalence of a fatal fever, he was diligent in visiting the sick, and offering to them the blessed consolations of religion, as a remedy for their spiritual maladies, and a cordial for their fears. In this labour of love, he forgot his own dangerous exposure in his anxiety to rescue them that were ready to perish; and in the joyful death of some whom he visited, his own faith was strengthened. After a year of severe and unremitting labour in this interesting section of the Church, he retraced his steps to his native state. Leaving Augusta, Ga., on the 14th of December, he reached Charleston, on the 25th, and remained until the 14th of January, attending, in the mean time, the sessions of the Conference.

The Virginia Conference for 1808, was held in Lynchburg on the 2d of February. Thither Mr. Lee repaired after leaving Charleston. Among other matters brought before this session, was

a memorial from the New York Conference, bearing date "May the 7th, 1807," and addressed to the other Conferences in the Connection, proposing measures for the composition of a delegated General Conference. The memorial was intended to express to the General Conference of 1808, the views of the Annual Conferences as to the necessity of such a provision for constituting a representative legislative body for the Church. The great preponderance of two bodies, out of the seven, in the General Conference of 1804, had opened the eyes of the ministry to the importance of remedial measures for what might prove an evil and bitter thing to the Church. And having been defeated in the attempt to *call* a General Conference, it was now sought to secure the same object by a memorial to the regular and legal session of the supreme judicatory of Methodism. To such a measure the Virginia Conference could entertain no objection; and Mr. Lee, who had defeated the movement of the preceding year, had been too long an advocate of such a change to breathe a word in opposition to it now. When therefore it was introduced, it required but few words to explain its object, and the Conference, with great unanimity, joined its sister Conferences in the effort to secure a representative system of government for the Church. It is believed all the Conferences adopted this memorial; and thus far the measure may be regarded as predetermined when brought up for final action. An exact copy of this memorial may be found in Bangs's History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, vol. ii. pp. 226-8.

Lynchburg, in the times we write of, was not paved, and its streets were sometimes nearly impassable. In retiring from the Conference room one day, Mr. Lee, having some business on the opposite side of a street along which he was passing, was sadly puzzled to find a crossing-place. After searching for some time, and fruitlessly, he paused, and entered into a grave debate with himself, whether he should ford the street "knee-deep in mud," or abandon the object of his pursuit. In this mood of mind, John Charleson,\* a stout athletic negro, a preacher, and a great admirer of Mr. Lee, came up and took part in the consultation. Ascertain-

\* John had been emancipated by the Rev. Stith Mead; after which he travelled extensively, and preached with great acceptability and usefulness. He was a sensible man, and a good preacher.

ing the difficulty in the case, he proposed to overcome it by taking Mr. Lee across on his back. The proffer was instantly agreed to, and he mounted the back of his generous friend. Two hundred and fifty-nine pounds of living flesh is no small burden for one man to bear, but John bore it till he reached the middle of the street, where he paused to overcome the attraction of gravitation, by shaking his burden higher up on his shoulders. Perspiration stood in large beads upon his face, and he groaned audibly. But he staggered on, paused, and dryly asked his rider if he might not set him down and rest a spell. Gathering up his strength for another effort he pressed on, but turning up the corner of his eye until it reached the face of Mr. Lee, he groaned out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" Quick as thought the response came—"You 'do groan being burdened.'" And he was burdened. But dry land was reached, and with mutual pleasure they pursued their walk side by side.

Another incident, characteristic of the times and of Mr. Lee, may also be introduced here. The Virginia Conference was so inveterately wedded to old bachelorism, that it was very much like losing caste for one of its members to enter into the holy estate of matrimony. At least, the perpetrator of such an offence against usage, felt it incumbent upon him to justify his conduct. A case of the kind had occurred in the Conference; and the member stated the fact, and gave his reasons for choosing no longer "to be alone." Among other things he stated that it had been a subject of serious reflection for some time; he had consulted judicious brethren, and made it matter of earnest prayer; and in view of all the circumstances of the case he felt it to be his duty, and believed it would be better for him; and therefore he had married. As there was no law prohibiting marriage, no offence was committed, and the statement was gratuitous rather than necessary as a requirement of the Conference. But it provoked the pleasantry of Mr. Lee, and slowly rising from his seat, he said he was afraid the Brother had fallen into a mistake: he had been in that way himself, and would like to tell his experience. "I once thought I ought to marry," he said, "and I thought a great deal about it too. And I thought I must pray about it; but some how or other I always found myself praying 'Oh Lord, let thy will be done—but do let me



have the woman !' I wanted the woman, and my prayers always ended there. Perhaps the Brother wanted the woman, and she and the Lord were willing. But they both opposed me !' The cheerful laugh that followed this relation of personal experience may have derived much of its zest from a consciousness of its general applicability to such cases.

Mr. Lee was appointed to Cumberland circuit. Business called him home for a few days, and he returned to his father's. While here, he officiated as priest in the family—baptizing an infant sister. It is a somewhat singular fact, that at this very time one of his sisters had grandchildren older than this little stranger. His father had married three times, and this little one was born unto him in the seventy-eighth year of his age. Speaking of this occurrence, he used to say he had two sisters so far from each other in the extremes of life that neither had a tooth in her head ! The eldest was fifty-five when the youngest was born.

For some time Mr. Lee had been collecting materials for the History of the Methodists, and he was now busily employed in arranging and preparing them for the press. This, and his pastoral duties, occupied him until the period of his departure to the General Conference.

The General Conference of 1808 was in many respects the most important yet held in the Church. It was held in Baltimore, commencing on the 6th and ending on the 20th of May. It was composed of one hundred and twenty-nine members, representing the seven Conferences, in the following proportion : Philadelphia, thirty-two ; Baltimore, thirty-one ; Virginia, eighteen ; South Carolina, eleven ; Western, eleven ; New York, nineteen ; and New England, seven. Nearly *one-half* of the members were from two Conferences ; and the union of either of the nearest Conferences with these upon any question would have given them a majority of nearly two-thirds of the body. To say the least of it, such a condition of things was not safe. It was time to remodel the Conference.

For the first time since the organization of the Church, Dr. Coke was absent from the General Conference. He had married, and was devoting himself to the work of God in England. At the session of 1804, permission had been given to him to return to England, and remain there until the present session, unless previously

recalled by three Annual Conferences. In the interval he wrote a circular letter to the Conferences, proposing to return, on condition that the work should be divided, as nearly equally as possible, between himself and Bishop Asbury. This was not agreed to, and accordingly, under date of November 16th, 1807, he addressed a letter to the General Conference, in which, after acknowledging the irregularity of his circular letter, he proposes, if he may share the rights, powers, and privileges of the Episcopal office, with Bishop Asbury, he will "return for life" to America. Or if this should not accord with the views of the body, he suggested a mode by which his name might be retained in the Minutes, and he continue to reside in Europe. This last proposition received the sanction of the Conference. There seems to have been a very general dissatisfaction with Dr. Coke. His circular letter, above referred to, was one cause of this, but not now the chief one. The letter written to Bishop White, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in 1791, had been kept profoundly secret until some time in 1804, and since then it had come to the knowledge of the Church, and received the cordial disapprobation of the entire body. This imprudent letter, written without consultation with any one, has been the occasion of a great deal of uncircumcised rejoicing on the part of Protestant Episcopalians. They have regarded it as a concession of the question of the validity of Ordination, and a clear indication of the author's consciousness of the defectiveness of his own. These assumptions, like the most of those concerning Ordination, are wholly gratuitous, and derive no support from the tenor of the letter, or a just construction of its terms. This is not the place to analyze the letter, nor to enter into the controversy it has originated. We rather think the two Churches might safely compound the matter, and mutually agree to adopt, upon this subject, at least, "the doctrine of reserve." For if it be humiliating to Methodism that one of its Bishops so far forgot his position and its responsibilities, as to make such propositions as are contained in this letter, it must, upon every principle of delicacy and honour, be as humiliating to the Episcopal Church that one of her Bishops should so far forget what was due to himself and his office as first to refuse to destroy a confidential letter, when so requested, and then subsequently to publish the letter without the knowledge of its author.

If Bishop Coke was wrong in writing the letter, Bishop White was not right in giving it publicity. Extremes meet in this case; and they demand a generous and magnanimous forbearance. Neither party can afford to be insolent. Still, we believe the course of Dr. Coke can be vindicated upon higher and stronger grounds than can be brought to the justification of Bishop White. Leaving the other party out of the case, we may speak freely of Dr. Coke. That his course was highly improper in all its aspects, we should not hesitate to affirm, even if we had no authority of his own to sustain us in the opinion. But his own concessions, upon every point of the controversy, are full and explicit; and his explanations of his views and intentions in the premises, have so many proofs of honesty on their face as to leave small cause for comfort to those who have made his letter to Bishop White the occasion of so much incontinent and wordy declamation against Methodism. The dissatisfaction in the United States, consequent upon the promulgation of this affair, had reached the ears of Dr. Coke, and he sat down at once to explain and correct whatever was obscure or misunderstood. His letter to the General Conference, containing his own version of the affair, as to his desires and intentions in seeking the union of the two Churches, and the principles upon which it was to be based and regulated, bears the date of January 29th, 1808. Its perusal must convince every impartial reader that the proposition is as destitute of any real cause to disparage Methodism, as it is of concessions to the pretensions of Churchism. It was a simple proposition for Churches equal in rights and authority to unite for the purpose of a more general and enduring usefulness. This is all that can fairly be made of the letter to Bishop White.

These letters of Dr. Coke were, at the opening of the General Conference, referred to a committee, and their report is contained in a letter addressed to the Doctor, defining his future relations to the Church, and granting full absolution for all his faults in the matters referred to. This letter is as creditable to the Conference for its style and spirit, as it is complimentary to Dr. Coke for his faithful and important services to the Church. The subjoined extracts will serve the double purpose of showing the nature of the

confessions of the one, and of the temper in which forgiveness was meted out by the other:

"Your two letters were respectfully received, and had a very salutary effect upon our minds. The reasons which you have assigned for some former transactions, and the ingenuous candour which you have manifested, in frankly acknowledging and declaring the motives and inducements that led you to those measures; together with your affectionate acknowledgment that in certain cases you were mistaken as to your views of some of the points in question; as, likewise, your manifest friendship and good-will to this Connection and your American brethren, and your evident solicitude to retain a place and standing among us; taking these circumstances collectively, they had a great influence upon some of our minds, in removing certain suspicious fears which had been imbibed, rather unfavourable to your standing among us.

"You may be assured that we feel an affectionate regard for you; that we gratefully remember your repeated labours of love toward us, and that we sensibly feel our obligations for the services you have rendered us. We hope that no circumstances will ever alienate our Christian affection from you, or yours from us," &c.\*

These paragraphs from a long and affectionate letter will satisfy every unprejudiced mind of the fact that the explanations of Dr. Coke, especially concerning the letter to Bishop White, were entirely satisfactory to the Conference; and that, in its judgment, there was nothing in the intentions of their absent Bishop to compromise the integrity of the Episcopacy, or to lessen the reputation or usefulness of the Church. It was only a mistaken effort to do good, the history of which furnishes a singular illustration of misplaced confidence on the one hand, and of that perversity of human nature on the other, which, even in good men, forgets the good that might have been accomplished, or the evil that really exists, in its rejoicings over a seeming concession to the selfishness of sect.

In the conclusion of the case of Dr. Coke, the Conference, if it did not displace him from the office of Superintendent, denied him all authority, under existing circumstances, to exercise its functions.

\* For this, and other documents here referred to, see Bangs's *History M. E. Church*, vol. ii. pp. 196-226.

Mr. Lee says: \* "It was thought best for Dr. Coke to be no longer considered as a Superintendent of the Methodists in the United States." The decision is expressed in these words:

"Dr. Coke's name shall be retained in our Minutes, after the name of our Bishops, in a 'N. B. Dr. Coke, at the request of the British Conference, and by the consent of our General Conference, resides in Europe; he is not to exercise the office of Superintendent among us, in the United States, until he be recalled by the General Conference, or by all the Annual Conferences respectively.'"

The election of an additional Bishop to meet the annually enlarging demands for Episcopal labour, was devolved upon this Conference by the death of Bishop Whatcoat, and the decision in the case of Dr. Coke. Of the necessity of strengthening the Episcopacy, there was a very general agreement; but also a considerable diversity of opinion as to the best mode of effecting the object. There were strong advocates for a modified Diocesan Episcopacy: discontinuing the office of Presiding Elder, and electing seven Bishops, one for each Annual Conference, with Bishop Asbury at their head as a kind of Presiding Archbishop. Others were for the appointment of two additional Bishops, and maintained the superiority of an itinerant general superintendency over all other systems for the unity and success of the Church. And another party, agreeing in their general views with those just mentioned, nevertheless thought one additional Bishop would be sufficient for all the present necessities of the Church. These different views were "largely and ably discussed by some of the leading members of Conference on each side." But, except the last, they signally failed. After each was tried, a nearly unanimous vote was given in favour of the election of one Bishop; and they immediately proceeded to the election. On the first ballot, ninety-five out of one hundred and twenty-eight votes were given for Mr. M'Kendree, and he was declared to be duly elected to the office. And on Wednesday the 18th, after a sermon by Bishop Asbury, on 1 Tim. iv. 16, he was solemnly consecrated to the office and work of a Bishop in the Church of God. In the

\* Hist. Methodists, p. 350.

Ordination service, Bishop Asbury was assisted by four of the oldest ministers present, viz: Freeborn Garrettson, Philip Bruce, Jesse Lee, and Thomas Ware. The devoted, efficient, and valuable services of Bishop M'Kendree, to the latest period of his life, confirmed the Church in the excellency of the appointment, and justified the wisdom of the Conference in making the selection. It was a joy to Bishop Asbury, "the electing dear Brother M'Kendree Assistant Bishop"; and he rejoiced especially that "the burden is now borne by two pair of shoulders instead of one—the care is cast upon two hearts and heads." He was indeed a "true yoke-fellow."

The great question, absorbing in importance all others brought under the notice of this body, respected the composition of the future General Conferences of the Church. The General Assembly of the Preachers at the Christmas Conference of 1784, was not, in any correct sense of the term, as since used, a General Conference of the Church.\* It was an extraordinary meeting of the ministry, under extraordinary circumstances; but it either did not perceive the necessity, or felt it did not have the authority to convoke another meeting of the kind. We believe the question was not even started in the Assembly; and it certainly adjourned without making, or even suggesting any provision for a subsequent general meeting of the Ministers. For several succeeding years, until the institution of the Council in 1789, as in the years preceding 1784, we find the Annual Conferences, "without let or hindrance," exercising all the rights and powers of a General Conference as constituted in 1792. The organization of the Church under an Episcopal regimen, was the sole object for convening the Christmas Conference; and that object accomplished, its powers ceased, and the meeting was dissolved. It had no successor. From these facts, it is evident that the idea of a supreme legislative department of the Church was not contemplated as a constituent of its organization. The necessity for some such department of authority as would consolidate the government, and give efficiency, as well as uniformity to its ad-

\* Mr. Lee, in his History, dates the General Conferences from that of 1792, which he says was the *first*. Dr. Bangs adopts the same mode of computation,—calling the session of 1804, "the *fourth* regular General Conference." Vol. ii. p. 150.

ministration, was very soon apparent, if not very generally felt: but there was nothing in the constitutional provisions of the Church to legitimate such a meeting; and nothing, in their own experience in legislation, to suggest such a concentration of the power "to make rules and regulations for the whole body." Any careful analysis of our Ecclesiastical system, as it existed previous to the Christmas Conference, will result in the conviction that a supreme legislative assembly was indispensable to the harmony of its operations, and the permanency of its unity. The *facts*, that as late as 1782 the Northern Conference, assembling in Delaware or Maryland, exercised the exclusive right of "making rules and regulations for the Church," and also claimed the power to veto the acts and doings of the Southern Conference, held in Virginia or North Carolina, together with the entire history of the contest respecting the Ordinances, will confirm the truth of this position. In the presence of these, and numerous other facts in the preceding history of Methodism, it is marvellous how the assembly of 1784 could organize the Church, and suppose they had endowed it with immortality, without any provision for a confederation of the Annual Conferences, or any suggestion for the future legislation of the Church. We search their records in vain for an intimation upon the subject. It was not long subsequent to this, however, before the pressure of circumstances awoke the mind of the Church to its necessity. Subsequent to the Christmas Conference, the Annual Conferences seem to have been more independent of each other, although, owing to the Episcopacy, their union was more compact and strong; indeed there was now equality of rights, a more complete uniformity of administration, and greater harmony of objects and interests.

But besides the "Moderate Episcopacy" established in 1784, there was no centre of unity, and no centralization of authority, either to enact laws or control the Conferences. And there were, in the annual extension of territory, the multiplication of Conferences, the increase of the ministry and membership of the Church, and in the very nature and peculiarities of the system of operations, constantly occurring causes to exhibit the necessity, and demand the establishment, of such a department of supreme legislative jurisdiction. The Church was soon sensible of this defect in its

organization. The experience of a few years, in which the system had time to develop its practical working, sufficed to convince all concerned in the administration of its government, that a power yet higher and more pervasive than its Episcopacy, was wanting to its perfection. It was not long—how could it be?—before this conviction developed itself in attempts to engraft upon the existing system the power experience had proved to be so essential to its completeness. The first, most prominent, and most abortive effort to meet this defect of our Ecclesiastical system, was “The Council.” This measure was adopted in 1789, and was the joint product of the several Annual Conferences, under the recommendation of the Bishops.\* In a preceding chapter, we have given a detailed account of the history and inherent defectiveness of this plan of meeting the prevailing and formidable difficulties everywhere pressing upon the Church. We need not repeat them here. The fault of this effort at amendment is to be found in the fact, super-added to its inherent evil qualities, that it was designed as an appendix to a system otherwise deemed complete in itself; whereas the system itself was at fault. It was constitutionally defective, and required to be remodelled. Grafting would not meet this necessity. The defect was in the frame-work of the system; its remedy, to be effectual, must be incorporated into its constitution. Of this “entirely new and exceedingly dangerous” plan, as he calls it, Mr. Lee was a most earnest opponent; and, as we have seen, he stated his objections to the assembled Council. The cavalier treatment he received on the occasion, only confirmed his opposition, and made him rejoice the more when it fell into neglect, and ceased to tantalize and vex the Church. The dissolution of the Council, disappointing as it did the expectations of all who anticipated in its establishment deliverance from evils already numerous, and constantly increasing, left the Church a prey to the original evils of its defective organization, greatly augmented as they unquestionably were by a signal failure in a studied and generally approved measure to reach a higher grade of perfection in government. We may readily suppose, under these circumstances, that the minds of many were turned to the consideration of a

\* Lee's Hist. p. 149.



remedy for the necessities of the Church. This may be mere conjecture, and we have no means of substantiating it as a fact. Indeed, after a careful examination of all the records within reach, we can find only one proposition for a plan to meet the exigencies of the Church. And, since it agrees so nearly with what was ultimately adopted as a permanent principle of our constitution, we feel an especial gratification in recording the only existing but brief memorial of it, to the credit of Mr. Lee's soundness of judgment and far-reaching discernment. A mere fragment of this plan, or perhaps more properly, a mere synopsis of its main features, is preserved in the Journal of Bishop Asbury. Under date of July 7th, 1791, the following entry may be found :

"This day, Brother Jesse Lee put a paper into my hand, proposing the election of not less than two nor more than four Preachers from each Conference, to form a General Conference in Baltimore, in December 1792, to be continued annually."

Much as we may regret the disappearance of this "paper," containing as it probably did an extended and matured view of his plans and reasonings, we have enough of it to satisfy us of its general identity with the views incorporated in the constitution of the Church in 1808, to meet the exigency he was seeking to relieve, and also to show its superiority, in every element of its arrangement and operation, to the Council so recently bereft of its vitality. The Council was composed exclusively of Elders, holding their offices by Episcopal appointment. Mr. Lee proposed to constitute a representative General Conference, composed of members elected by each Annual Conference; and the body thus constituted he designed to endow with immortality. We need not press these contrasts, since its identity with our present organization, and its disagreement with the Council, are too obvious to need remark. What effect this proposition had upon the mind of the Bishop, or through him upon the minds of others, we have no means of ascertaining. But we can trace the doctrines of Mr. Lee's "paper" through the succeeding periods of the Church, quite up to the time when the principles it contained were embodied in the measures to constitute a delegated General Conference. Of these measures, and some of the incidents connected with their

adoption, especially as they are connected with the personal history of Mr. Lee, we propose giving a somewhat detailed account.

The memorial, heretofore referred to as adopted by the Annual Conferences of 1807, and having for its object a change in the composition of the General Conference, originated with the New York Conference. Our limits will not allow us to copy it, yet a few extracts from it are necessary to a correct understanding of the subject. After a quaint preliminary address, beginning with these words: "We, as one of *the seven eyes* of the great and increasing body of the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States, which is composed of about five hundred Travelling, and about two thousand Local Preachers, together with upwards of one hundred and forty thousand members," &c., it proceeds to state the grounds upon which it believes a change to a representative General Conference will be conducive to the permanence and prosperity of the Church:

"When we take a serious and impartial view of this important subject, and consider the extent of our Connection, the number of our Preachers, the great inconvenience, expense, and loss of time that must necessarily result from our present regulations relative to our General Conferences, we are deeply impressed with a thorough conviction that a representative or delegated General Conference, composed of a specific number, on principles of equal representation, from the several Annual Conferences, would be much more conducive to the prosperity and general unity of the whole body, than the present indefinite and numerous body of Ministers, collected together unequally from the various Conferences, to the great inconvenience of the ministry, and injury of the work of God."\*

This memorial was presented to the Conference on the 9th of May, the third day of the session. It was immediately referred to a committee of fourteen, composed of two members from each Annual Conference: Ezekiel Cooper, J. Wilson, George Pickering, J. Soule, W. McKendree, W. Burke, W. Phœbus, J. Randall, P. Bruce, J. Lee, S. G. Roszell, N. Reed, J. McClaskey, and T. Ware. We believe the committee was instructed to draft a constitution for a delegated General Conference. At the first meeting

\* For full report, see Bangs's Hist. vol. ii. pp. 226-228.

of the committee, after an interchange of views, it was resolved to appoint a sub-committee of three to prepare the instrument and report to a subsequent meeting. The sub-committee consisted of Messrs. Soule, Cooper, and Bruce. These three, after consultation, resolved that at a meeting to be held the next morning, each one should bring a draft framed by himself, when, after a comparison of views, one might be selected, or prepared from the common stock, for presentation to the original committee. At the appointed time, Mr. Bruce appeared without stone or mortar for the edifice. Messrs. Soule and Cooper had each a building complete and strong; but utterly unlike each other in size, structure, or arrangement. Like the "iron and clay" in Nebuchadnezzar's image, they could not be united, nor harmonized; but there was a majority of three in favour of the plan drawn up by Mr. Soule. It was then presented to the committee of fourteen, adopted by a majority, and submitted to the Conference. The report is in the following words:

"Whereas it is of the greatest importance that the doctrine, form of government, and general rules of the United Societies in America be preserved sacred and inviolable: and whereas every prudent measure should be taken to preserve, strengthen, and perpetuate the union of the Connection:—

"Therefore, your Committee, upon mature deliberation, have thought it advisable that the third section of the form of Discipline shall be as follows, viz:

#### "SECTION III.

##### *"Of the General Conference.*

"1. The General Conference shall be composed of delegates from the Annual Conferences.

"2. The delegates shall be chosen by ballot, without debate, in the Annual Conferences respectively, in the last meeting of Conference previous to the sitting of the General Conference.

"3. Each Annual Conference, respectively, shall have a right to send seven Elders, members of their Conference, as delegates to the General Conference.

"4. Each Annual Conference shall have a right to send one delegate, in addition to the seven, for every ten members belonging to such Conference, over and above fifty: so that, if there be sixty

members, they shall send eight; if seventy, they shall send nine, and so on in proportion."

The rest of the report is substantially the same that is now comprehended in the section of the Discipline entitled, "Of the General Conference." With the exception of a few verbal alterations, the restrictive regulations are now nearly the same as they were prepared by Mr. Soule.

There was some opposition to this report in the committee, but it was more general and decided in the Conference. In both, Mr. Lee was the most prominent opponent. His favourite measure now was to compose the body by seniority rather than by election. Regarding the legislative department of the Church as properly a fit arena for the counsels of age and experience, and not dreaming that intrigue and ambition would ever seek to display their powers on such a theatre, he preferred to commit the grave and important interests of the Church to the counsels of those whose judgments had been matured amidst long years of toil, and whose highest attainments had been learned in the school of Christ. Others joined him in this opposition, and the debate was animated and protracted; but this was the strong point, and Mr. Lee led the van of the attack. It was under the force of his arguments, as we have been assured by very high authority, the report was defeated. When the vote was taken on the report of the committee, it was rejected by a vote of 64 to 57. This defeat was a source of surprise and sorrow to the friends of the measure. After some consultation, the matter was recommitted, and was returned to the Conference with this material alteration: It proposed to constitute the General Conference upon the basis of one delegate for every five members of an Annual Conference. In nearly all other respects, it scarcely differs from the present constitution. It did not, however, relieve the objections in Mr. Lee's mind; and he again opened the debate against its adoption. But it was his turn to be defeated, or to be reconciled to the measure. At a pause in the discussion, Mr. Soule moved to amend the article so as to read, "to be appointed by seniority or choice, at the discretion of such Annual Conference." This motion, if it did not put him in a dilemma, neutralized his opposition, and he was speechless. Mr. Soule knew Mr. Lee was as inveterate an advocate of the independent rights of the

Conferences, as he was of the condition of seniority in constituting the General Conference; and, with a sagacity that has not yet failed him, he placed his strongest adversary between the cross-fires of his own favourite doctrines. As amended, it maintained the independence of the Conferences, and committed to the custody of that independence the very condition he defended as the proper basis of representation. His point was gained; but he felt that he had lost a victory. But he submitted; and, walking up to his friend, poked him in the side with his finger and whispered, "Brother Soule, you've played me a Yankee trick!" The point was now settled; and, concurring heartily in the restrictive regulations, he gave them his support, and the report was adopted by a nearly unanimous vote.

While the paternity of these regulations, which gave a written constitution to the Church, is unquestionably to be placed to the credit of Bishop Soule, it is also due to historical accuracy to state, that the third restriction originated with Mr. Lee. In the Journals of this Conference, the following entry occurs, under date of May the 24th, the day on which the whole measure was finally adopted:

"J. Lee moved, That the next General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government, so as to do away Episcopacy, or to destroy the plan of our itinerant general Superintendency."

A resolution, introduced at several preceding sessions, to make Local Deacons eligible to Elder's orders, was again brought forward, and lost by a vote of 66 to 60. This measure was finally carried in 1812.

The effort, heretofore so productive of strife and debate, to make Presiding Elders elective by the Annual Conferences, was brought up for consideration again, on the 16th, under the annexed resolution, offered by Ezekiel Cooper, and seconded by Joshua Wells:

"Resolved, That the Discipline be altered so as to read:

"*Ques.* By whom shall the Presiding Elders be chosen?

"*Ans.* Each Annual Conference respectively, without debate, shall annually choose by ballot its own Presiding Elders."

This resolution did not pass off "without debate;" but it was soon settled, and rejected by a vote of 73 to 52.

On the last day of the session, a matter was introduced and disposed of, that, as a peculiarity of legislation, and for its bearings upon a question that has since ruptured the Church, deserves a conspicuous place in every history of Methodism. We give it in the terms in which it stands in the Journal:

"Moved from the Chair, That there be 1000 Forms of Discipline prepared for the use of the South Carolina Conference, in which the section and rule on slavery shall be left out." "Carried;" *i. e.* adopted.

As there were now two Bishops, occupants of "the Chair," it cannot, except by some surviving member of the Conference, be certainly determined who was the mover of this resolution. It was either Bishop Asbury or Bishop M'Kendree; and every probability of the case indicates the Senior Bishop as the author. Except in Virginia, we believe Bishop M'Kendree had never exercised his ministry in the south; and nearly the whole of his time had been spent in the Western Conference, at least since 1797. He could not therefore be familiar with, or under the influence of opinions existing in South Carolina, and requiring so extreme an act of legislation. But since 1785, a period of twenty-three years, Bishop Asbury had been visiting the state, watching the progress of Methodism, and studying its welfare. He was intimate with all its wants; and a most ardent and exemplary labourer in its fields. In the presence of these facts, and knowing the resolution to have come from one of the Bishops, is it a violation of historical justice to assume it as the offspring of the Senior Bishop?

But what shall we say of the act itself? To regard it as the expression of a sincere desire to mitigate the evils of former enactments, and to prevent evil for the future, is only a tribute to partial charity at the expense of general justice. The interests of Methodism in South Carolina may have been, and no doubt were, greatly perilled by the system of unwise legislation about slavery heretofore pursued by the Church. But were they the only sufferers? And what kind of legislation was it that gave two kinds of law for the government of the same people, under precisely the same circumstances? Here were two codes of Discipline put forth as law by the same Ecclesiastical legislature, and intended to operate for the promotion of unity and uniformity among the same people!

Both the general "rule," and the particular "section" on slavery, were to be omitted in forms of the Discipline intended for circulation in a prescribed section of the Church. In 1804, retaining the rules in the Discipline, they exempted the Societies in North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee, from their operation. But in 1808, the Discipline itself was expurgated; and, by special enactment, exempted from conveying the laws of the Church to a select circle of its members. Doubtless there was benevolence intended by this measure; but it presents such an anomaly in legislation, as tempts us to blush (notwithstanding its decided confirmation of the wrong and wretched policy of the Church in its measures to extirpate slavery) at every aspect in which it presents the legislative acumen of our fathers. Was it from this feeling, or from unwillingness to circulate this great disparaging fact of their pro-slavery affinities after all, that Dr. Bangs omits all reference to the subject in his account of the General Conference of 1808? The omission of so important a measure of so important a session is almost as great an anomaly in history as the act itself is in legislation. One thing, however, is apparent in this, and all the other anti-slavery proceedings of our fathers. They would never have suffered "the great evil of slavery" to produce the still greater evil of rending the seamless garment of Christ in twain. They would have preserved the unity of the Church maugre all the evils of slavery,—if the windings of legislation could have secured so great and beneficial an end.

Heretofore the word "salary," in respect to the ministry, was commonly used in the Discipline. It was an obnoxious word to Mr. Lee, and under a resolution introduced by him it was erased, and the word "allowance" substituted in its place.

Other measures of importance were enacted during this session of the Conference. We have brought under review the most prominent and imposing, both in their character and results. In every respect it surpasses, in the spirit of its debates, the nature of its decisions, and their prospective influence upon the Church, all preceding meetings of the kind. It is especially to be remembered as having consummated, and made perfect, as far as that word can apply to human works, the measures so happily commenced in

1784. We gravely question whether, in strictness of language, the Church can be said to have been organized previous to the General Conference of 1808. It is at least certain, that up to this time it was defective in all that relates to a constitutional legislative department. But its organization was now complete, its government placed upon a safe and permanent foundation, and, confining power, in all its ramifications, within just and wholesome limits, it left the system, in the inherent might of its own energies, to fulfil its mission of preaching peace by Jesus Christ to the weary and heavy-laden.



## CHAPTER XII.

## FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1808, TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1812.

The Christian Soldier—Enters on a Visit to New England—Strange Scenes at a Camp-Meeting—New York—Norwalk—A Change—Free Seats—Bells—Note, Remark of Asbury on Bells—Pews—Bad Manners—Mr. Lee and the Lawyers—Farmington—Effect of a Word—Rev. George Pickering—Confounding a Baptist Minister—Prosperity of Methodism—Returns to Virginia—Conference at Tarboro—Bishop Asbury's Prejudices against Slavery—Change of his Views—Brunswick Circuit—Mr. Lee elected Chaplain to the House of Representatives—Sustains a severe Injury—Returns to his Circuit—Conference in Petersburg—A Question of Episcopal Power—Mr. Lee appointed Presiding Elder—Publishes his History of the Methodists—Motives for writing it—Its Character and Value—Note, Bishop Asbury's Objection to it considered—Labours on his District—Conference at Raleigh—Complaints—Anecdote—Amelia Circuit—Chaplaincy—Purchases a *Home*—Conference in Richmond—Bishop Asbury complained of for ordaining a Slave—Election of Delegates to General Conference—Stationed in Richmond—General Conference—Bishop M'Kendree's Address—Refusal to elect a Bishop—Local Deacons—Anecdote—Effort to alter the Mode of constituting the General Conference—Presiding Elder Question—A Passage between Bishop Asbury and Mr. Lee—A strange Procedure in Legislation.

THE warrior, when age has calmed the passions of manhood; and years have elapsed since he met the foes of his country in the shock of deadly strife, must feel a peculiar pleasure, in revisiting the fields of his fame, to find the storm of war succeeded by the sunshine of peace, and smiling harvests and the merry song of husbandry enriching the scene, and gladdening the soil where hosts of human beings "in fell encounter fiercely met," and cannon-hail mowed down whole ranks of living men. But richer and holier are the transports of the Christian Soldier, when he revisits the fields of his bloodless triumphs, and finds hearts and families, once alien from God and full of discord, now "brought nigh by the blood of the Cross," and, in the fellowship of faith and love, seeking their long and last repose in the midst of the felicities that spring eternal in the kingdom of heaven. "He that

goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." We have seen Mr. Lee, in the pure signification of these words, going forth, the bearer of precious seed, among the arid and barren Churches of New England; and we have seen him rejoicing in the multitude and fullness of his sheaves. But long years have since elapsed; others have entered the fields wherein he had sowed, even weeping, "the good seed of the kingdom," and have gathered harvests of precious ripe fruits "unto the praise of the glory of God's free grace." He would revisit those fields of his first and joyous planting, to see if the harvest answered to the sowing; and again to sow precious seed, that might spring up and give joy to the reaper when the hand of the sower should be mouldering in the silence and solitude of the grave. Let us follow him.

For several years, Mr. Lee had meditated a visit to New England,—a land full of precious recollections to his heart. Before leaving Virginia for the seat of the General Conference, it is believed he made all necessary preparations for this journey, especially in providing for his circuit during his absence. This tour, which extended to the remotest point of his early travels in Maine, and embraced nearly the whole remaining portion of the year, is full of interest. But it was sad in some of its developments of what he considered departures from the simplicity of pure Methodism. His notices of these will be brought distinctly into view. They will serve to show how soon "tares" may be sown among "wheat," and how seriously they interrupt the harvest. Nor will they be useless as warnings of the impolicy of innovation.

Form and power are both essential to godliness; but they are entirely different in their aspects and influences. Mr. Lee could not be classed among those condemned by the Apostle, who, "having the form of godliness, denied the power thereof." Of the two, he would have been more disposed to deny the form. The power he fully credited, and, in a choice between them, would have preferred it in its most extravagant manifestations. Forms, such as are identical with worship and duty, were his delight. But mere ceremony—externalism,—that neither came from, nor reached the heart, was an abomination that vexed his righteous soul. The

reader will remember his displeasure at "the gown and bands" of Bishop Asbury, in one of the first years of his ministry. He had not yet learned to conform to popular taste in outward show; and he would "not follow a multitude to do evil." It was not long after leaving Baltimore before he was compelled by stress of principle to "turn away" from a ceremony that seems to have been as popular with others as it was offensive to him. He attended a camp-meeting in New Jersey, and was not long in discovering a strange adhesion to forms in some of its arrangements. In imitation, perhaps, of the scenes enacted at Jericho, "seven trumpets" were used on all occasions: to awake them in the early morning, to summon them to the place of preaching, to notify the hour of retirement at night; and as often as circumstances called for it, the seven trumpeters blew their seven trumpets! But what most offended the taste of Mr. Lee, was the concluding scene of the meeting. He must describe it himself: "Another thing which was new to me, was their manner of taking leave of each other, which was as follows: The men, with their trumpets, went foremost, rank and file, blowing as they went; and then the Preachers followed after; and then the men in general followed the Preachers. They then made a circular march, and when the Preachers came round to the place from whence they started, they turned out of the ranks to the right hand, and stopped and shook hands with all the men next to them, till they all came round; and then the men who were marching in the circle shifted sides, each with his companion, and went round again; and those who were on the opposite side from the Preachers the first time, came next in turn to the Preachers, and had an opportunity of shaking hands. Then the women marched around twice in the same form, and all shook hands as the men had done before them. Most of them continued singing as they went. I was requested to march with them, and to stand and shake hands; but I excused myself, for indeed I did not like so much ceremony and form."

Dissatisfaction at this proceeding cannot surprise any right-minded Christian. The real surprise is that it was at all tolerated. There was no godliness in it; and, though a species of "will-worship," it was devoid of all "show of wisdom." Happily, such

scenes were not common, or camp-meetings would long since have ceased to shed the savour of a holy influence upon the Church.

After spending a week in New York, and preaching nine times, he attended a camp-meeting of great profit to his soul, at Cow Harbour, from whence he sailed in a small sloop to Norwalk, Conn., beginning his journey of pleasure at the point where, as the pioneer of Methodism, he entered the spiritual desolations of New England in 1789. There was joy in Norwalk on that day. Nearly twenty years had passed away since, a stranger and unwelcomed, he stood on a stone by the way-side, and preached the power of godliness in the doctrine of a present salvation. The distant then, were the near and warm-hearted now. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord," was the general welcome. And he was not without emotion in saluting those whom God had given him as the seals of his apostleship. The joy was mutual; and it was joy in the Lord. Beginning here, he traversed, in nearly the same order as in his first movements, the places in which he had opened the pathway for those who were now gathering the continually ripening fruits of a harvest that still yields abundant and accumulating rewards to faithful labour. He was everywhere met with a cheerful welcome; and his ministry was more than ordinarily effectual in confirming the faith and comforting the hearts of the people. His Journal abounds with notices of good meetings, large congregations, and personal pleasure derived from intercourse with old friends; a cheerful gratitude for the good already wrought, and everywhere observable; and a joyful confidence that, while true to its great distinctive principles, the success of Methodism in the land of the Puritans, like leaven, or like itself everywhere else, must keep pace with the progress of society, and modulate it after its own key-note of spirituality, or mould it into the form of its own consecration to God and the good of men. But he could not close his eyes to what he regarded as departures from its elemental principles; nor would he hold his peace when, as a consequence of the discovery, his sorrow was stirred within him. It is a singular fact that the preaching of the gospel to the poor, constituting as it does the distinguishing glory of the cross, has been very frequently, even among professing Christians, urged as a reproach of Methodism. It was its peculiar glory, however, in the estima-

tion of Mr. Lee; and any feature of the system, or any arrangement in its operations that contravened their rights or abridged their freedom of access to the Church, was regarded as a positive defect—a great evil, without a redeeming quality, or the remotest promise of good. He preached a free salvation, upon the fullest and broadest principles of free grace. Believing God “would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” he could fraternize with no system of measures that, in any possible contingency, denied to any one the largest liberty of hearing the Word of God, or in its legitimate influence subjected them to any species of humiliation in order to hear it. With this knowledge of his views, and without endorsing all of his opinions, we can sympathize with him in the discovery that the union between free grace and free seats in the Church, had been severed in several places in New England. It was a rude earthly grafting upon the heavenly stock of Methodism. He was not, however, bitter in his censures, as a few specimens from his Journal will show:

“Newport, Rhode Island. The Methodists and others have united to build a Methodist Meeting-House, which is not finished but is fit to preach in. They have a steeple to it, with a pretty large bell.\* The house is fitted up with large square pews, so that a part of the people sit with their faces, and others with their backs towards the preacher; and these pews are sold to purchasers. Male and female sit together. Is not this a violation of Methodist rules?” He had never before seen a bell in a Methodist house of worship.

Boston. “Preached at night in the *new* Meeting-House. I did not feel as much freedom in this house as I did in the old. This new Meeting-House is large and elegant, I think eighty-four by

\* Bells to Churches were considered a great innovation by the early ministers of Methodism. In the following it will be seen how “bells” and “boys” disturbed the gravity of Bishop Asbury. The “boy” and the “bell” were in Augusta, Ga. “I am grieved to have to do with boys. Hugh Porter had written to this town about a station; and added to the mischief he had formerly done: I shall take care of these youngsters. And behold, here is a bell over the gallery—and cracked too; may it break! It is the first I ever saw in a house of ours in America: I hope it will be the last.” Journal, vol. iii. p. 210.

sixty-four. It has an altar round the pulpit, in a half-circle, and the house is fixed with long pews of a circular form, to be uniform with the altar. The front of the gallery is of the same form. It looks very handsome, and will contain an abundance of people, but it is not on the Methodist plan, for the pews are sold to the highest bidder."

"I preached at ———. My text was, Deut. xxix. 29. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, &c.* I felt but little faith or satisfaction in the beginning of the discourse. The people have fixed pews all around the house, and all the rest have no seats, except a few loose boards on blocks. Whilst I was preaching, if a well dressed person came in, the people would jump up in their pews and slam open their doors, and thump on their pews, and beckon with their hands to get the person into their pews. I was quite displeased with their pews, and with their conduct."

These extracts need not be multiplied. Their introduction has a two-fold object: the one personal, the other historical. Personally, they exhibit the undisguised opposition of Mr. Lee to the pew system; and at the same time declare his uncompromising adherence to original Methodism, with its plain Churches and its free seats; with its heaven-sanctioned doctrines of free grace, freely offered to all, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Historically, they show where, and at how early a period this departure from a distinctive and cherished regulation of Methodism was commenced.

Whatever opinion may be entertained with regard to pews, very few, we imagine, will differ with Mr. Lee in his displeasure at the conduct of the pew-holders in the last-mentioned case, as extracted from his Journal. And the prudence of his first biographer, Mr. Thrift, in suppressing the place of its occurrence, is deserving of high commendation. Since, although it may develope some of the phases of the system, in its invariable tendency to "have respect of persons," there was no necessity of exposing those so unhappily exhibiting the weakness of human nature under circumstances of peculiar temptation. But, notwithstanding these disparagements, the adoption of the pew system by the Methodists of New England has strong mitigating circumstances that must come up for consideration in every impartial examination of the question. The estab-

lished Churches around them, and there was one or more in every place they entered, were nearly all of this order. The people were accustomed to them, and strongly prejudiced in their favour; and the habits of the people, their social equality, domestic arrangements, extending even to a rigid supervision during Church hours, and general regularity in attending public worship, all prepossessed them in favour of pews, and left them, when the subject of their permanent Church relations, and the influence of those relations upon their household morals and happiness came up for settlement, with no other guide for themselves than their personal experience of the direct beneficial results of the system, and with no good hope of the enlargement of Methodism in the country without this partial conformation to the customs of the community. In adopting this mode of sitting in their Churches, therefore, there was no collision with existing rules, and could be no rupture of established opinions, as there would have been in introducing them among the Methodists of Virginia. It was only a wise application of the important doctrine of expediency. We are aware that it may be, and is often urged upon this and kindred topics, that the Methodists ought to have maintained their original ground, and insisted upon the strict observance of the rule in the case. It is at least presumable they did so with all the force of earnestness and entreaty. But without effect; except in so far as it contributed to excite the inquiry: whether they should, in a matter on which revelation is silent, and no ingenuity can prove to be essential to salvation, yield this liberty to the people, or circumscribe and finally destroy the power which Methodism was everywhere putting forth to redeem and save those for whom Christ died, but who had been drilled into an obstinate indifference by the heartless preaching of irresistible decrees guided by sovereign will and electing love. In such an issue, we doubt not but the sturdy, and otherwise uncompromising pioneer of Methodism in New England, would have yielded, not exactly "the rule," for there was no law upon the subject, but the general usage, or "economy" of the Church, to the demands of a necessity that could not be controlled without injury to the growing usefulness and permanent establishment of the Church.\* We do

\* In 1784, the Discipline required our houses of worship to be built "plain and decent." In 1820, after "decent," the words "and with free seats" were

not intend to advocate the erection of pewed Churches, but there are points involved in the question that it would be unwise and illogical to overlook in its settlement. Church edifices, in a country like ours, where religion derives no pecuniary aid from government, must be erected by the voluntary contributions of the people; and it seems an unwise interference with their tastes and wishes to determine after what model of architecture, or what form of occupancy, they shall be built and used. And there is no more *right* vested in the Church to determine the mode of occupancy, than there is to decide as to the matter of style. *Advice*, in the premises, is proper, and under ordinary circumstances should be respected. But if declined, the right of the people to do what they will with their own is unquestionable; and if they, for reasons in their judgment good and sufficient, and therefore entitled to respectful consideration, prefer to erect such a house in which to worship God, the only resort of the Church is to refuse to supply them with ministers, and abandon them to influences believed to be unfriendly to spirituality and disastrous to their souls. Such a decision might evince a stern love of "our economy," but it would comprise neither the wisdom of the serpent, nor the harmlessness of the dove. "A more excellent way" is to care for them still; to watch over their souls as those that must give account; to extract, by a kind of spiritual chemistry, the natural evils of the system, and replace them with "humility and the fear of the Lord," the twin graces of religion, from whence issue "riches and honour, and life."

In his travels through Maine, Mr. Lee was surprised to find a dense and thriving population in districts where, in former years, long miles of unbroken forest intervened between the dwellings of the settlers. Here he found houses of worship, and availed himself of every opening to preach to the people; and his reception was always cordial, even among those who, having not seen, yet knew him, and loved him for his work's sake. Incidents full of interest in his personal history are connected with the scenes through which he was now passing, even if they do not exactly belong to the

added; and also in the general answer to the first question, the paragraphs 2, 3, and 4, as they now stand in the Discipline, were introduced. These represent pews "as contrary to our economy," and advise their discontinuance.



times of which we are writing. A few of these, as they serve to portray his character, may be preserved.

The oft-told anecdote of Lee and the Lawyers, has its location between Boston and Lynn.\* Mr. Lee was riding leisurely along the road to Lynn, on one occasion, when he was overtaken by two sprigs of the law, who knew him to be a Methodist Preacher, but of whom he knew nothing. Full of life and good humour, they determined on a little innocent amusement with the parson; and after a friendly salutation, one riding on either side of him, something like the following pass-at-arms occurred between them:

*1st Lawyer.* "I believe you are a Preacher, sir?"

*Mr. Lee.* "Yes; I generally pass for one."

*1st Law.* "You preach very often, I suppose?"

*Lee.* "Generally every day; frequently twice, or more."

*2d Law.* "How do you find time to study, when you preach so often?"

*Lee.* "I study when riding, and read when resting."

*1st Law.* "But do you not write your sermons?"

*Lee.* "No; not very often, at least."

*2d Law.* "Do you not often make mistakes in preaching extemporaneously?"

*Lee.* "I do sometimes."

*2d Law.* "How do you do then? Do you correct them?"

*Lee.* "That depends upon the character of the mistake. I was preaching the other day, and I went to quote the text, 'All *liars* shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone;' and, by mistake, I said 'All *lawyers* shall have their part—'"

*2d Law.* (interrupting him.) "What did you do with that? Did you correct it?"

*Lee.* "O, no, indeed! It was so nearly true, I didn't think it worth while to correct it."

"Humph!" said one of them (with a hasty and impatient

\* The location and genuineness of this anecdote are derived from a contemporary and intimate friend of Mr. Lee, who received it from himself.

glance at the other), "I don't know whether you are the more a knave or a fool!"

"Neither," he quietly replied, turning at the same time his mischievous eyes from one to the other; "I believe I am just *between* the two!"

Finding they were measuring wit with one of its masters, and excessively mortified at their discomfiture, the knights of the green bag drove ahead, leaving the victor to solitude and his own reflections. The echoing of a merry laugh that chased their steeds, added very little comfort to the self-esteem of their riders.

In Farmington he spent a night with Mr. Read. During the day's ride his saddle-girth had broken, and in the true Methodist Preacher's style of the times, soon after reaching the house, he sat down to repair it. While thus engaged near a window, his host came and stood at his side. Mr. Lee, always seeking to do good, and to turn everything to godly edifying, said: "Mr. Read, did you ever stand in your own light?" The gentleman supposing he had come between Mr. Lee and the light, stepped hastily aside, apologizing for the inadvertence. He was assured that he was not between Mr. Lee and the light; and the question was repeated in a grave and deliberate tone of voice. Suddenly perceiving the object of the question, and feeling its force, he replied with considerable emotion, "Yes, sir. All my life I have been standing in the light of my own peace and happiness." This question, suggested by the employment of the moment, had a powerful effect upon the mind and life of Mr. Read. It elicited reflection; and in a short time he made an open profession of religion, lived to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour, and died in full assurance of faith. So strange, to some who find it, are the means of life and salvation. The instruments, how very weak; the effects, how glorious and God-like! A grain of mustard may produce a tree beneath whose branches the birds of Paradise may sing the new song in strains always new, and always transporting.

At one of the early Conferences in Lynn, when everything was calm and cheerful in the body, and they were engaged in the examination of character, the usual question, "Is there anything against Brother Lee?" was asked. "Yes," said the Rev. George Pickering, springing to his feet, as if impelled by a sudden deter-

mination, "I have an objection to Brother Lee." "What is it?" asked the Bishop. "I think Brother Lee is too self-willed," was replied; and a broad smile greeted the sally. "We have no law against *that*; Brother Lee can retire," responded the Chair. The next name on the list was Mr. Pickering's. "Anything against Brother Pickering?" "Yes, sir. He *will* have his own way!" A generous laugh attested the point-blank accuracy of the retort, and sanctioned the playful episode in the grave doings of the session.

Another incident, characteristic of Mr. Lee, and serving to illustrate the nature of the hostility everywhere opposed to the establishment of Methodism in New England, may be introduced at this stage of his history. On one of his early visits to Reading, Conn., he preached on "the *way* of salvation." Setting forth Christ as the Saviour of sinners, he described, with great clearness and force of application, the way of repentance and faith, as leading directly to Christ, and as the means of obtaining salvation. Elder Hull, a Baptist minister, was present, and listened to the sermon with considerable impatience. The sermon was no sooner finished than the Elder rose up in the congregation, and said, "I differ with the Preacher. He says that in order to be saved, you must repent and believe. But he did not say whether you could repent in one week, or three weeks, or six weeks. He says, 'repentance is sorrow for sin.' It takes some time to be sorry for sin. He says, 'repentance is confession of sin;' and it takes some time to confess sin; and he says, 'repentance is forsaking sin;' and it takes some time to forsake sin; especially if you have been some time committing it. And then after all this, he says, 'you must believe in Christ.' All this will require a long time. Now, for my part," continued Mr. Hull, "I believe religion may be obtained in a very short time." Surprised, no less at the objection than its frivolousness, Mr. Lee straightened himself up in the pulpit, and after a keen and somewhat satirical gaze at his opponent, said in reply, "The gentleman seems to be offended with me for not saying *how long* it would take any one to embrace religion! True, I did define repentance, but I did not say how long it would take any one to repent. That is no part of my business. I know it will take a sinner as long to be converted as it will take him to come to Christ by repentance and faith. It may

all take place in a very short time. A hunter goes into the woods to hunt, and presently finds a deer: he levels his gun, 'that takes some time;' he brings his sight along the gun to bear on the deer, 'that takes some time;' he pulls the trigger, 'that takes some time;' then the flint strikes the pan, 'that takes some time;' then the fire kindles the powder, 'that takes some time;' then the powder catches in the barrel, &c., then the ball flies out, &c., passes along the distance, &c., and finally hits the deer, &c. Now all this takes time. But it does not take a week to kill a deer! Is the gentleman satisfied?" If he was not satisfied, he was silenced. And the repetition of the ridiculous objection, "*that takes some time,*" drawled out, as it was, at the end of every sentence, confounded the captious objector, and created no small diversion at his expense. It was as fatal to his cause as the unerring rifle of the huntsman to the deer; and left him quite as dead in the field so rashly entered.

The chief gratification to Mr. Lee, in this extended and laborious visit, was derived from the evidences everywhere exhibited of the enlarging usefulness and prosperity of Methodism. A change, a very great one, in its present and ultimate effects, had come over the land of the Puritans. The Methodists were increasing their congregations, multiplying their members, and annually spreading their influence over a larger tract of country, and a greater number of ardent and devoted friends and followers. One fact, referred to in his Journal, will serve as well as many, to show the nature of the changes through which he was passing. At a sacramental meeting in Farmington, at which there were twelve Preachers, he says: "I was pleased and surprised to see such a crowd of persons at the Lord's table. When I first came among them, about fifteen years ago, they had never seen a Methodist. And many of them were afraid that they were a dangerous set of men; but, at this time (1808), we have *nine* local Preachers, and I suppose about one hundred persons to commune with us. Surely the Lord hath done great things for us." Such indications of success were general, and they could not fail to interest him. He had laboured too earnestly in the planting, not to find great joy in the time of harvest. And of the fruitfulness of the harvest, the annexed facts will testify. Within the territory he had entered,

single-handed, in 1789, there was now one Annual Conference, containing six districts, fifty-four circuits, seventy-four itinerant ministers, and 8761 white and 64 coloured members. This was a cheering result; and, surveying the field and its fruits, he might well thank God and take courage.

Having gratified the desire of his heart, in visiting the scenes of his early and most toilsome ministry, he left his children in the gospel, hoping to meet them again in a purer and better world, and turned his face to the sunny land of his nativity. Reaching New York, he had the pleasure of spending several days in the city, helping the Churches in a gracious revival of religion—now of several months' continuance—and which had been full of good fruits in the conversion of many souls. Preaching as he went, he arrived in Petersburg about the 9th of December, and remained with his relations until the time of leaving for Conference.

The Virginia Conference for 1809, was held in Tarborough, N. C. There were eighty-four ministers present. "Sixty of them the most pleasing, promising young men; seventeen Preachers were admitted; in all the Conference there are but three married men. The high taste of these southern folks will not permit their families to be degraded by an alliance with a Methodist Travelling Preacher; and thus involuntary celibacy is forced upon us; all the better—care and anxiety about worldly possessions do not stop us in our course, and we are saved from the pollution of negro slavery and oppression."\* Bishop Asbury was exceedingly prejudiced against "negro slavery." It was probably this prejudice that prompted the harsh remarks of the preceding sentence. But if the conjecture of the Bishop, as to the cause of the celibacy of himself and his contemporaries, be correct, it is at least gratifying to know they had so much self-respect, and so just a sense of propriety, as to prefer celibacy to an alliance with any but the very best families of the country; and the fact, based upon the authority of Bishop Asbury, that to marry creditably, they were almost compelled to connect themselves with slavery, ought to have mitigated the severity of their Ecclesiastical enactments, which, however splenetic, were left as a dead letter upon the statute-book of Methodism. But

\* Asbury's Journal, vol. iii. p. 257.

the light, since so effulgent and strong in the condemnation of these evil measures for the extirpation of slavery, was already dawning upon the mind of the Bishop. Speaking of the comparatively small increase in the Church during the year, he says: "We are defrauded of great numbers by the pains that are taken to keep the blacks from us—their masters are afraid of the influence of our principles. Would not an *amelioration* in the condition and treatment of slaves have produced more practical good to the poor Africans, than any attempt at their *emancipation*? The state of society, unhappily, does not admit of this: besides, the blacks are deprived of the means of instruction—who will take the pains to lead them into the way of salvation, and watch over them that they may not stray, but the Methodists?"\* We can feel neither surprise nor sadness at this sorrow of the venerable Bishop. From the beginning, he and his compeers in the crusade against a purely civil institution, might have understood "the state of society" better than to have supposed they could carry their measures of emancipation. *Amelioration* of the condition of the slave, by the simple preaching of the cross, was within their reach, and their legitimate duty; and fidelity to duty would have brought incalculable good to both master and servant. Their present leanness, therefore, and their inability to reach, with the comforts of religion, the poor slave, was the providential exposition and punishment of their unwise and gratuitous legislation upon the subject. The Bishop well understood the cause of the obstacles now lying in the way, not of emancipation, that was hopeless, but of amelioration: the "masters were afraid of his principles." It was this, not hostility to their religious instruction, that held them back from the Methodists. And, but for the prevalence of wiser counsels, the door of entrance would have yet been closed.

The work of God had not been as extensive and successful in the Conference as in preceding years. Yet they were not without evidences of God's gracious favour. They were not declining in numbers; in some places souls had been born of the Spirit; and in summing up the results of the year's work, it was ascertained that, after deducting the losses from deaths, expulsions, &c., there was

\* Asbury's Journal, vol. iii. p. 258.

still a clear gain of 434 whites and 166 coloured; a total of 600 souls added to the number of them that believe.

Brunswick circuit was assigned to Mr. Lee as the field of his toil for the year. He was soon at his work, and laboured with customary diligence and zeal until May, when, in order to publish his History, he repaired to Baltimore. A crisis in our national relations with Great Britain had arrived, and to meet the emergency, the President had summoned an extraordinary session of Congress to meet in Washington, on the 22d of May. Two days previous to the opening of Congress, Mr. Lee arrived in the city, and was present at its organization. Circumstances, in his judgment sufficient to justify the step, induced him to become a candidate for the Chaplaincy of the House of Representatives. On Saturday, the 27th, the election took place, and on the second ballot he was declared to be duly elected to the office; and on the ensuing Monday he entered upon his official duties. This was a novel appointment for a Methodist minister; and it was a subject of dissatisfaction to many of his brethren. They had no proper appreciation of its importance, and disapproved of his accepting it. Of his own motives in the transaction, we have in his Journal a brief but honest record. "I believe," he writes, "my intention was pure in offering for this place, and I must do the best I can while I am in the office. I expect some good will be done directly or remotely. I wish to leave all to God. O Lord, thou knowest my heart, thou knowest I desire to please thee, but unless thou wilt stand by me, I shall labour in vain." The opposition of his brethren to this appointment will be noticed in another place. For the present it is only necessary to add, that from one so accustomed to scan his motives, so conscious of right and good ones, and so faithful to them, such a declaration of rectitude is entitled to very high and respectful consideration. The best commentary upon his conduct in his new position, is to be found in the fact of his re-election for several successive years. About this time an accident befell him, from the effects of which it is believed he never fully recovered. Returning from Baltimore, whither he had gone on business connected with his forthcoming work, as he was descending a hill near Elk Ridge Ferry, his horse "fell at full length, breaking the shaft of his gig, and throwing him head-foremost from his seat; in falling, his leg

struck against the end of a broken screw, making a most dangerous wound," and leaving him quite helpless. Providentially, an acquaintance passing along discovered him, and assisted him to reach a house in the vicinity, where his wound was dressed as well as circumstances would admit. He afterward resumed his journey, though in great pain; and reaching his home in the city, he was compelled to call in a physician. He was confined to his room under medical treatment for several weeks. It was a severe tax upon his love of locomotion. But his power of endurance was equal to the emergency. In July he was able to return to Virginia, and resume his duties on the circuit, though but partially relieved from the effects of his fall. He continued at his pastoral work with marked evidences of God's blessing, until December, when, being re-elected Chaplain to Congress, he again took up his residence in the Metropolis of the Union. He was not inactive here. When not engaged in his official duties, he sought to make full proof of his ministry, by preaching at different points in the city and its vicinity, conducting prayer and class-meetings, visiting the sick, and in all other ways, that a sincere desire to do good, of every possible sort, to all sorts and conditions of men, will prompt a man full of zeal for God and full of love for souls, to undertake. Here, as elsewhere, and at every period of his ministry, he was in labours abundant. Nor would he allow his engagements in Congress to interfere with his duties to the Church.

In February 1810, he attended Conference in Petersburg. Of this session the records are very barren of interest. The year had been not very abundant in revivals and their gracious fruits. Good had been done, and there had been times of refreshing in many a pastoral charge. There was a small increase on Brunswick circuit, and in the Conference a clear gain of 362 whites and 411 coloured. A fact in the general history of Methodism is barely referred to by Bishop Asbury, and which may be very properly introduced here. Previous to the General Conference of 1796, the Bishops exercised the right of appointing the times of holding Conferences at their pleasure. At this period the Church was divided into six Conference districts, with their respective boundaries, and independent rights. And the Bishops were authorized to hold a Conference in Maine, "if they see it necessary."



The General Conference of 1800 created the New York Conference out of portions of the New England and Philadelphia Conferences. Thus the Conferences continued, and no new one was added till 1809, when the Genesee Conference was established by the Bishops. This Episcopal act seems to have given dissatisfaction. It was regarded as an assumption of authority, and there was great jealousy of assumed powers. In his brief note of the Virginia Conference of 1810, Bishop Asbury has the following remark: "I gave an answer to an important question—it was, 'Whether the Bishops had a right to form the eighth, or Genesee Conference?' as also gave an answer to the Virginia Conference." It is presumable the "answer to the Virginia Conference" was to a similar question, and it is probable the "important question" came from another Conference. The Bishop does not inform us as to his answer, but a very brief one would have contained an ample justification of the procedure. In 1796, a *proviso* had been inserted in the Discipline in these words: "Provided, that the Bishops shall have authority to appoint other Yearly Conferences, in the interval of the General Conference, if a sufficiency of new circuits be anywhere formed for that purpose." This proviso was re-enacted at each succeeding General Conference, with a very slight modification of authority, until 1832. It therefore fully covered the case; and its mere repetition must have given entire satisfaction.

At this Conference, Mr. Lee was appointed Presiding Elder of the Meherrin district. After making the necessary arrangements for his Quarterly Meetings, and other appointments, conformably with his custom of filling up the intervals of time between these meetings, he returned to Washington to fulfil his duties in Congress. In April, he corrected the last proof-sheet of his History, and was not a little rejoiced when, on the adjournment of Congress in May, he was able to distribute several of them among the members. Of this work, so often referred to in these pages, a brief notice will not be out of place.

The volume contains three hundred and sixty-two pages; and comprises a condensed account of the rise and progress of Methodism, from its introduction into America down to the year 1809. In a letter to a friend in this country, written a few weeks before

his death, Mr. Wesley, after stating that he had written "a distinct account of the work of God" under his ministry in Great Britain, made this remark: "We want some of you to give us a connected relation of what our Lord has been doing in America, from the time that Richard Boardman accepted the invitation, and left his country to serve you." This request, made about 1791, while it seems to have made very little impression upon the ministry generally, did not so easily pass away from the mind of Mr. Lee. He desired to meet its requirements; and even after its author had been removed to a sphere where knowledge may be supposed to come by intuition, and is perfect, he desired still to supply the needed and important information. Many, we are assured in the preface of the work, of the Preachers and people in this country, were also anxious for a similar narrative. It was a desire to meet this general and natural wish of the Church, that induced Mr. Lee, after patiently waiting for others to do the work, without any prospect of its being attempted, to enter upon its performance himself. He certainly could bring to the composition of such a work, qualities of a kind not to be surpassed by any native minister in the Connection. He expresses the conviction in the preface of his book, that "no Preacher born in America has had a better opportunity of being thoroughly acquainted with the Methodist Society, than I have. When I became a member of the Methodist Society, in the spring of 1774, there were but 1160 members in the whole of the United States. I continued four years as a private member; and five years more as a Class-Leader, Exhorter, and Local Preacher; and have since been regularly travelling and preaching for upwards of twenty-six years. I have also travelled extensively from St. Mary's River in Georgia, to Passamaquoddy Bay in Maine." Entering into the fellowship of Methodism at so early a period of its history; travelling so generally and successively through its borders; and with habits of observation that saw everything, and a memory that forgot nothing, he was in all these respects eminently qualified to trace the history of a people with whose spiritual fortunes he had linked his own in the spring-time of his heart, and to whom he had been faithful and devoted until that heart was waxing feeble "in the sere and yellow leaf" of life. For facts as they

occurred, with their causes and effects; for a detail of the progressive growth and enlargement of Methodism, and the period and circumstances of its introduction into new places; a development of its doctrinal principles, and its measures for promoting them; an exposition of its varied, and often erroneous legislation; a history of its Conferences, Annual and General, with their measures to enlarge, consolidate, and strengthen the Societies;—for all these things he was fully competent; and his work is as comprehensive and accurate in its account of Methodism, as it is unpretending in its style and veracious in its statements. As a literary work it has very little merit, and it pretends to none. Its excellencies are to be measured by another standard than that of taste and embellishment. It uses language, not for ornament, but as the vehicle of truth; and feeds with facts rather than fancies. But if Mr. Lee contributed nothing to the literary wealth or credit of Methodism, he has brought it under great and lasting obligations for his collection of facts; constituting, as they do, the *materials* out of which the early history of Methodism in America, if ever better written, must of necessity be composed. Every subsequent labourer in this department of the Church, will be compelled to resort to Mr. Lee for authority as well as information; and in proportion to his fidelity here, will his work be true and valuable. And while the credit of being the first historian of Methodism belongs to him, his industry in collecting facts, and his fidelity in recording them, will entitle him to the respect and gratitude of Methodism to the latest period of its history. But while we thus speak of the work, it is due to fairness to say there was one drawback to its general popularity—it was thought not sufficiently to exalt and distinguish Bishop Asbury. As a mere matter of fact, it may be conceded as justly liable to this objection. But then it is the fault—if it be a fault—of his plan, and not of his purpose. His references to the Bishop are always kind and respectful, as they were to all of his contemporaries. He was not writing a biography, but a history; and therefore his work abounds with matters and facts of a general Ecclesiastical character, rather than those of a private and personal nature. Considerations of this kind ought to have protected his work from all suspicion of unwilling-

ness to award the meed of praise to the Senior Bishop.\* But it survived the opposition from this source, and was received with very general favour by the great mass of the people. Power, if not fond of flattery, is always supposed to be; and those who suspect it are not slow in offering the incense at its shrine. It is to these, rather than to the Bishop, we would trace the hostility to the "History of the Methodists."

Congress adjourned on the 1st of May, and late in the month Mr. Lee entered upon his duties as Presiding Elder. On arriving at his first appointment, according to the arrangement made at Conference, he was surprised to find that his plan had been changed, and "the Preachers of the several circuits in his district, with the exception of one, had held their Quarterly Meetings." In this condition of things, he determined to fill the interval until the next round, by visiting and preaching at each of the places at which he had appointed a meeting, and "thus compensate the

\* In his Journal, vol. iii. p. 291, Bishop Asbury has the following remarks: "I have seen Jesse Lee's History for the first time: it is better than I expected. He has not always presented me under the most favourable aspect: we are all liable to mistakes, and I am unmoved by his. I correct him in one fact. My compelled seclusion, in the beginning of the war, in the state of Delaware, was in no wise a season of inactivity: on the contrary, except about two months' retirement, from the direst necessity, it was the most active, the most useful, and most afflictive part of my life. If I spent a few dumb Sabbaths—if I did not, for a short time, steal after dark, or through the gloom of the woods, as was my wont, from house to house to enforce that truth I (an only child) had left father and mother, and crossed the ocean to proclaim, I shall not be blamed, I hope, when it is known that my patron, good and respectable Thomas White, who promised me security and secrecy, was himself taken into custody by the light horse patrol: if such things happened to him, what might I expect, a fugitive and an Englishman?" After a careful examination of the matter, we can see no reason for the objection of the Bishop. Here is the text of Mr. Lee: "On the fifth day of March (1778), Mr. Asbury began to lie by at Thomas White's in Delaware State, where he shut himself up." Again: "Notwithstanding Mr. Asbury was shut up in a friend's house, he looked forward, and hoped for the time to come when he might again visit his brethren, and be of some service to the scattered flock, among whom he had laboured almost seven years." Hist. p. 64. If this was the strongest reason for correcting Mr. Lee,—and why else select it?—it certainly was not a very high misdemeanor. But we may rejoice at the displeasure of the Bishop, since otherwise he might never have written a passage so full of interest and in illustration of an eventful period of his life. We are glad to know the fact, but we can perceive no cause of offence in the language of Mr. Lee.

people for the derangement of his plans in the first instance." There were *eight* appointments on his district; and with such industry and perseverance as belonged to his nature, he could accomplish this work without interfering with his original plan for the year. His abundant labours were not without a rich return of blessing to his own soul, and good to the people. His Quarterly Meetings always attracted large crowds of people, and were generally seasons of great religious interest. He preached during this year with unusual unction, and laboured to fulfil his ministry with unabated zeal and devotion. No one could perceive, although some affected to fear it, that his popularity with the representatives of the nation had lessened his love of holiness, or paralyzed his energy in preaching it. He could serve his country, without compromising the purity or power of his religion. But, as we shall presently see, he had to pay dearly in another quarter for the distinguished favour in which he was held in the high places of the nation. Fulfilling all, or nearly all, of his positive duties in his district, he was invited to Washington late in November, and again elected Chaplain, at the opening of Congress, and entered at once upon his duties.

The Conference for 1811 was held on the 7th of February, in Raleigh, N. C. Thither Mr. Lee repaired, not without apprehension of meeting with some opposition from some of his brethren. Objections against his book and his Chaplaincy were brought before the Conference. In 1808, the General Conference, after slightly modifying it, restored a rule to the Discipline which had been stricken from it in 1804. It was in these words: "No Travelling Preacher is permitted to publish any book or pamphlet, without the approbation of the Annual Conference to which he belongs, or of a committee chosen by them." Whether he had sinned against this provision of the Discipline, we cannot certainly determine. We believe, however, the objections were principally levelled against the book itself; and were rather fastidious and hypercritical, than substantial and just. We need not dwell upon them. Their authors, themselves familiar with the facts and principles detailed in the volume, could not perceive, as they did not feel it, either the necessity or propriety of collecting and publishing them. Not needing the information it contained, they did not sup-

pose it could be useful to others. Absorbed in present duties, they overlooked their relations to posterity ; and not seeking fame, they forgot that it would be monumental of themselves and their deeds. Posterity owes them no gratitude for their hostility ; and the present appreciation of the volume is a sufficient rebuke of their unkind and short-sighted opposition. Every reference to it is a disparagement of their good sense ; a humiliation to the history of their proceedings in the case. But Mr. Lee not only offended their literary tastes in his book ; he had also grieved their pious sensibilities by accepting an office, not in the regular work it is true, but not opposed to the proper calling of the ministry, either in its spirit or its duties. At the time, it was as creditable and distinguished as it is now, and far more useful. The chief reason for this opposition was the loss of time it occasioned from the regular and more appropriate duties of his district. This objection, so far as it exhibits devotion to the duty of a faithful performance of all the functions of the ministry, is deserving of all honour. But if it was intended to imply that the office of Chaplain was incompatible with these functions, it is scarcely entitled to respect. At this distance of time, the whole affair is clothed with a humiliating singularity. It cannot be presumed that these good men felt any objection to the establishment of such an office in Congress. Indeed, the respectful recognition of the truth of religion, and of their dependence upon it, involved in the appointment of a minister to open their proceedings with prayer, and to preach to them on the holy Sabbath, must have commended itself to their devout reflections, as a national acknowledgment of the authority and superintendence of God, and of their own desire to secure his protection and blessing. If for these, or any other reasons, Congress felt the importance and confessed the necessity of identifying the national interests with those of Christianity, by what process of argument shall the Methodists be excluded from contributing to, or participating in the union ? For what good reason shall they exclude themselves from thus serving their country for the promotion of God's glory ? It is painful to record such an instance of rudeness against one of the most honest, faithful, and reputable servants of the Church. But the opposition did not disturb the calm and equable temper of Mr. Lee. For the sake of

setting this matter in its just light, and also of portraying the feelings of Mr. Lee under the intended infliction, the reader must accept our apology in advance, and excuse any seeming indelicacy in the subjoined account of the good-natured, but abrupt conclusion of the case. One of the leading opponents of the Chaplaincy was the Rev. C. Hines, a young man of fine address, and good parts. Mr. Lee had parried with strong arguments and excellent humour all the thrusts of the opposition, and was listening with a kind of half gravity of deportment to Mr. Hines's closing remarks, in which, in imitation of the French Court, in addressing the King, he repeatedly called Mr. Lee "*Sire*," "*excellent Sire*," "*venerable Sire*," &c. At the heel of one of these expressions, perhaps the last one, he was utterly confounded by Mr. Lee's jumping to his feet, and calling out "*Bishop! I wish you'd make that young brother quit calling me an old s—horse!*" This was too much for the gravity of the Conference, and the patience of Mr. Hines. A hearty laugh at his expense was as mortifying as the interruption that caused it; and when at length the body resumed its sobriety, he maintained a dogged silence. The case was settled. The triumph of the Chaplain was complete. The remarks of Mr. Thrift, in his Memoir, upon the occasion of these difficulties, are creditable to himself and the subject, and we cheerfully insert them here:

"Mr. Lee possessed a buoyancy of mind, and consciousness of integrity, which enabled him to bear up under any difficulty, with peculiar fortitude. And he uniformly maintained an independence of soul which procured for him the victory in almost every contest. He was a stranger to gloominess and dejection, which have been the companions of even some good men; and he had that perfect command of himself which never failed to place him in an elevated situation, superior to the assaults of the weak or the malevolent. Sometimes, when he saw that his assailants were actuated by improper views, and were destitute of solid ground on which to stand, a humorous anecdote served as a weapon of defence; and it often proved successful in frustrating his antagonist. His extensive travels, and consequent acquaintance with mankind, furnished him with a fund of instructive anecdotes, which he never failed to use to the best advantage; and, in self-defence,

when a consciousness of innocence presided in his breast, he often found it a more successful weapon than the gravity of argument or the labour of testimony would have been. Though to mortify an enemy as a rival was never his design, because he possessed too much delicacy of feeling to indulge in this work of humiliation, yet his keen satires were not unfrequently productive of this effect." This is an exact portraiture of Mr. Lee; and, coming from one who knew him so well, it must heighten our appreciation of a character already, and without it, presenting so many and such strong claims to our respect and confidence.

Mr. Lee received his appointment to Amelia circuit; and, leaving Raleigh, returned immediately to Washington City, and continued in his official duties until the adjournment of Congress, on the 4th of March. About the middle of the month, after having spent several days in Baltimore, he reached the residence of his father. In 1809, he had purchased a small tract of land near the old homestead; and he busied himself for a few days, during this visit, in making some improvements, and projecting others, on his farm. It was probably the apprehension that he might at some period be compelled, by stress of circumstances not now foreseen, as many of his contemporaries had been, to forsake the itinerancy; and as a prudent man, foreseeing the evil, he would prepare to meet it at its coming. Or perhaps actuated by that instinctive principle of humanity, the possession of a home it can fondly and freely call its own, and anticipating the possibility that, with a home, his old bachelorism might wind up amid the endearing accompaniments that always make home, *sweet* home, he would at least be prepared for any issue that a wise and merciful Providence might mark out for him, whether it should terminate his itinerancy or his celibacy. But, however this may be, the fact that, after a most toilsome service of twenty-six years in the ministry, he was able to pay for his home only two hundred and fifty dollars, and to enter into engagements to pay as much more at the expiration of four years, furnishes a very clear indication of the small emoluments of his office. How with his small allowance, his necessary expenses, and his open-handed benevolence, he had accumulated even that amount, is perhaps a greater marvel still. He, like the rest of his brethren, had found no spoils on which to



enrich himself. Without worldly goods, they nevertheless had the true riches, and were heirs of an enduring substance in heaven.

But he was also a spiritual husbandman; and he must care for the things of others, and bring forward their harvest of grace and consolation, enriching them with heavenly treasures. He soon entered upon the regular duties of his circuit, and gave all diligence to meet all the demands of the pastoral relation. "Not for wrath, but for conscience' sake," at every period of his life, he sought to "keep all the rules of a Preacher," and to "mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist Discipline." He gave himself, therefore, to the ministry of the word, prayer and class-meetings, visiting from house to house, and to such other efforts to make full proof of his ministry, as were compatible with the nature of his obligations to the united and general interests of his circuit. A portion of this year was also spent in supplying the lack of regular service from their own minister, to the Society in Petersburg.

On the 20th of February, 1812, the Virginia Conference was held in the city of Richmond. It was the first session in the capital of the state. According to Bishop Asbury, there was a decrease in the Conference and in the Church. "We shall not station," he says, "more than seventy-five Preachers this year, a less number than last." . . . "Old Virginia, because of the great emigrations westward, and deaths, decreases in the number she gives to the Methodists; but New Virginia gains." As a fact of some interest in itself, and for its bearing upon the general subject of slavery, we copy from the Bishop the annexed remarks. "A charge had been brought against me for ordaining a slave, but there was no farther pursuit of the case when it was discovered that I was ready with certificates to prove his freedom; the subject of contention was nearly white, and his *respectable* father will neither own him, nor manumit him."\* As this session immediately preceded the first delegated General Conference, the duty of electing delegates devolved

\* Journal, vol. iii. p. 323. It was then wrong in the judgment of an Annual Conference to "ordain a slave." "Pursuit of the case" would not have ceased if the ordained person had been a *slave*. A change had passed over the mind of the Church. As in all unnatural excitements, a reaction had taken place. Instead of denouncing slavery, the Church was prohibiting the ordination of slaves.

upon it. An election of the kind was a novelty in a Conference. The Virginia Conference, according to the ratio of representation, was entitled to eleven delegates. And its balloting resulted in the choice of the following ministers: Jesse Lee, Philip Bruce, John Buxton, Thomas L. Douglass, John Ballew, James Boyd, Richard Latimore, Charles Callaway, C. H. Hinès, Wm. Jean, and John Early. This first delegation under the representative form of our Ecclesiastical Legislature, was a judicious and strong one, comparing well with those of the sister Conferences, and capable of rendering efficient service to the Church and their immediate constituents. The session of the Conference, with the exception of a case of litigation mentioned by the Bishop, was one of considerable harmony and religious enjoyment. There had been a loss in the white membership, during the year, of 188; and a gain among the coloured of 23. At the close of the Conference, Mr. Lee, in connexion with Charles Callaway as his colleague, was appointed to the pastoral oversight of the Church in Richmond. After the adjournment he remained in the city, and entered upon the business of the station with his usual zeal and industry. He could only lay out the plan of his year's work, and commence its prosecution, before, according to the mode of travelling common to the times, he had to leave for the seat of the General Conference. As so much of his work in the city comprehends that period of the year subsequent to his return from New York, we shall omit the introduction of his pastoral labours in the metropolis of his native state, until we can notice them, more consistently with our prescribed plan, in the next chapter.

The first delegated General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, assembled in the city of New York on the first day of May, 1812. In addition to the two Bishops, it was composed of ninety delegates, representing eight Annual Conferences. We shall not attempt a detailed account, or even a complete analysis of the proceedings of this important session.\* Our object will be satisfied by the presentation of such facts as exhibit the views and illustrate the character of Mr. Lee. Soon after the organization

\* For these general objects the reader can consult Bangs's History, vol. ii. pp. 303-347; also Emory's History of the Discipline.

of the body, Bishop M'Kendree read an address to the Conference, prepared with care, and containing a condensed account of the state of the Church, and of the measures necessary in his judgment for preserving its efficiency, and promoting its success in the great spiritual objects of its organization. Among other things, he suggested the propriety of instituting inquiry as to whether "the work is sufficiently within the oversight of the Superintendency, and to make," with regard to a greater and more systematic supervision, "such arrangements and provision as *their* wisdom might approve." In this he was regarded as recommending an addition to the number of Bishops. He was followed, in an extemporaneous address, by Bishop Asbury, who, on this subject, concurred with him, and urged it upon the consideration of the Conference. This, and the other topics comprehended in the Episcopal address, were referred to an appropriate committee, with instructions to consider and report thereon. The Committee on the Episcopacy subsequently reported unfavourably to the recommendation to increase the number of Bishops; but not until they had ascertained, with almost a certain assurance, that a recommendation to increase the number, would be followed by the election of Jesse Lee to the Episcopate. A majority of the committee being opposed to this, carried their measure in committee, and brought their report into Conference. On its introduction, it was moved by J. Early, and seconded by E. Cooper, two friends of Mr. Lee, and in view of bringing him forward for the office, to amend the report by striking out the word "unfavourable," and inserting "favourable," in its place. This resolution opened the ball of discussion, and a long and earnest one ensued. In the end, the amendment was lost; and thus, by an adroit movement, an event was forestalled, that a fair and open resort to the invincible ballot-box could not have defeated. This fact is only referred to here for the purpose of showing the position still held by Mr. Lee in the confidence and affections of his brethren. It is believed a large majority of the northern delegates were anxious to elevate him to this deservedly high and influential office in the Church.

A question that had elicited debate in perhaps every General Conference since 1796, the graduation of Local Deacons to the order of Elders, was again brought forward, and finally carried, in 1812.

From its inception it had met the decided opposition of Mr. Lee, and he had several times defeated it. But its destination was to triumph; and the victor in former fields was to be defeated now. When the subject was introduced, Mr. Lee may have felt like Samson: "I will go out and shake myself, as at other times." And he did shake himself with giant energy of argument; but it was of no avail: the Philistines were upon him; another had discovered the secret of his strength; and he lost his cause,—not exactly as Samson lost his locks, by a too blind confidence in woman, but because he had always been too insensible of her charms, and had kept her and her enticements at arm's-length. He was sincere in his conviction that, according to the form of ordination, a *local* man, one who did not contemplate the regular pastoral work, could not, compatibly with the duties and demands of the office, assume its vows and obligations. And he urged this view with great force of argument, and variety of application; showing it was as wrong in the Conference to allow of such assumptions of duty, as it was in the candidate to take them; and that in one the case it would lessen their authority, as a solemn claim of the Church, and in the other trammel the rights of conscience, and subject it to the necessity of lightly esteeming vows made under solemn circumstances at the altar of God. These were strong views, and they were earnestly presented. But they were all neutralized by bringing Mr. Lee's own conduct to the test of a comparison with his own vows; and on one point, when stretched upon the balance he was found wanting. The Rev. Asa Shinn, perhaps one of the most acute and profound logicians ever raised by the Church in America, after replying to Mr. Lee's arguments, called his attention, and that of the Conference, to the fact that the same form of ordination required an Elder to "*rule well his own family*;" that Brother Lee had promised to perform this duty twenty years ago, and had not kept his promise to that day, and was therefore a delinquent, and ought to keep his own vows, &c. This was a shot at the very centre of his "single blessedness;" and it provoked a hearty laugh at the expense of the bachelor, in which no one engaged with greater relish than himself. He was completely disarmed, overmastered for once with his own weapon, and if he did not yield the principle, he gave up his opposition, and

thenceforth, upon that subject, held his peace. The measure was adopted; and has since constituted an integral element of our Ecclesiastical system.

Mr. Lee essayed again to carry his measure of constituting the General Conference by *seniority*, under the motion: "That the members of the next General Conference come by seniority; and that the superannuated and supernumerary Preachers shall not be included among the Senior Preachers. He also proposed that the ratio of representation be one for every six members of an Annual Conference." The resolution was rejected.

He also introduced a resolution prohibiting the "Doctrinal Tracts" from being bound up in the form of Discipline; and providing for their publication in a separate volume. This was carried.

The subject distinctly known in the legislative history of Methodism as the "Presiding Elder Question," was again brought forward with all of its excitants. The design of this movement was to make the office of Presiding Elders elective, and to constitute those thus elected, an Advisory Council of the Bishop in each Annual Conference. The principle involved in this question was identical with that comprehended in the resolution of Mr. O'Kelly in 1792, the defeat of which occasioned his defection from the Church. The knowledge of this fact made every introduction of the subject one of great gravity; and invested it with an interest that mingled more of fear than of hope. Opposed as Mr. Lee was to the object and measures of O'Kelly, he was nevertheless a warm advocate of the proposition to make the Presiding Elder's office elective, and therefore, independent of the appointment of the Bishop. On every occasion of its introduction, the strongest men of the Church were arrayed against each other, and the collision of their giant minds made the fearful of heart tremble for the safety of the ark of Methodism. The convictions of many of the friends of this measure must have been intrenched in the strongholds of their hearts; hence, through a period of twenty-eight years, from 1800\* to 1828, they persisted in their efforts to carry it, without an iota of abate-

\* Dr. Bangs, Hist. vol. ii. p. 332, represents Dr. Coke's resolution, defining the powers of the new Bishop, and those to which that gave birth on the same subject, as all that was done at the General Conference of 1800, in relation to the principle involved in the Presiding Elder question. But the Journal of the

ment in their devotion to the Church, or their zeal for its success. Indeed, they fed the sincere flame of their affection by these quadrennial attempts to improve a system of itinerant ministry, that needed, as they believed, only this addition to make it "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." But they were always in a minority, and it grew small by degrees, until in 1828 it disappeared from the councils of the Church as a living fact, and was buried, it is sincerely believed, without hope of resurrection. An incident in the debate on this subject in 1812, in which Mr. Lee was concerned, may very appropriately close our remarks upon it here. Bishop Asbury was strongly opposed to this measure in all its forms and aspects. He presided in the Conference during the most exciting debates upon the subject; and evinced his opposition by turning his back upon the speakers—sitting with his back to the body. Mr. Lee had made one speech on the affirmative side of the question. Some one in the opposition, in noticing the speech, said or insinuated that no man of common sense would have used such arguments as Mr. Lee had employed in support of his views. When Mr. Lee rose to reply, he said, in his own peculiar tone and manner: "Mr. President, Brother —— has said that no man of common sense would have used such arguments as I did in what I said when I was up before on this question. I am, therefore, Mr. President, compelled to believe the brother thinks me a man of *uncommon* sense." "Yes! yes!" said Bishop Asbury, turning half round in his chair, "yes! yes! Brother Lee, you *are* a man of uncommon sense." "Then, sir," said Mr. Lee, very quickly and pleasantly, "then I beg that *uncommon* attention may be paid to what I am about to say." The Bishop resumed his face-to-the-wall position, and amidst a general smile Mr. Lee proceeded with his remarks.\*

Conference shows that the body was brought to a direct vote upon the question by the following resolution introduced by the Rev. Wm. Ormond:

"Moved, That the Yearly Conferences be authorized to nominate and elect their own Presiding Elders."

The records of the General Conference of 1804 are especially barren. We cannot say whether it did, or did not agitate this question. It was regularly brought up from 1808 to 1828, when its spirit was quieted, and it ceased to vex the Church.

\* Of this discussion, Bishop Asbury, Journal, vol. iii. p. 327, says: "After a serious struggle of two days in General Conference to change the mode of ap-

There is one fact in the proceedings of this session, still confined to the records of the Conference, that for its novelty in legislative action, is deserving of a passing notice. At this period of our civil history, the corrupt practice of treating the voters, by the different candidates, was very common; and, as may be readily perceived, was productive of most pernicious fruits. The friends of morality and good order had essayed, in a variety of ways, to suppress and prevent this evil. At length the Church undertook to apply a remedy, and not until it was needed; for the custom was eating its way to the vitals of religion. Strong drink was then, as now, an abomination to the Rev. J. Early, and he abhorred the practice of treating at elections and during the canvass. Fearing the evil had been, or might be, practised by Methodists, and greatly desiring to lessen or prevent it, he introduced a resolution, designed to amend the Discipline by making the offence penal. For this purpose he introduced the annexed resolution, to incorporate the following rule into the Discipline: "If any member of our Church be convicted of giving treats at elections, directly or indirectly, he shall first be reprov'd by the senior minister, or Preacher of his circuit; and if afterward he persist in such evil practices, he shall be expelled from the Church." This measure was adopted, and authorized to be inserted in the Discipline as a rule of the Church. Immediately subsequent to the adoption of this resolution, a motion to adjourn until the first day of May, 1816, was put and carried. But in the confusion consequent upon the final adjournment of the body, the resolution of Mr. Early was called up, reconsidered, and rejected. Some counted, and insisted there was not a quorum present. And Bishop M'Kendree sub-

pointing Presiding Elders, it remains as it was. Means had been used to keep back every Presiding Elder who was known to be favourable to appointments by the Bishops; and long and earnest speeches have been made to influence the minds of the members: Lee, Shinn, and Snethen were of a side; and these are great men. . . . I had seventeen of the Preachers to dine with me; there was vinegar, mustard, and a still greater portion of oil; but the disappointed parties sat down in peace, and we enjoyed our sober meal." That the "greater portion of oil" neutralized the "vinegar and mustard," we doubt not; but we would have been better pleased if the Bishop had said "we enjoyed our social intercourse."

scribed, at the foot of the Journal, the subjoined dissent from this novel procedure :

"I consider the reconsideration of Early's motion unofficial.

"W. M'KENDREE."

In 1792, a clause "strongly *advising* the Methodists to discountenance all treats given at elections," &c., was inserted in the Discipline. But the *law* introduced by Mr. Early was never placed in the Discipline, and is not mentioned in any history of the Church we have ever examined. The "unofficial" reconsideration and rejection of this resolution, did not destroy its authority as a law of the Church; but it prevented its application to the class of offences it was intended to correct. This act closed the first delegated General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.



## CHAPTER XIII.

FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1812, TO THE CLOSE  
OF HIS LIFE,

Methodism in Richmond—Mr. Lee's Pastoral Labours—Labours in the Penitentiary—Dr. Rice attempts to supersede him—Fails, and leaves the Prisoners to the Care of the Methodists—Camp-Meeting—A Midnight Sermon—Re-elected Chaplain—Rebukes Profanity—Conference in Newbern—Mr. Lee preaches—Strange Effects of the Sermon—Brunswick Circuit—Chaplain to the Senate—Publishes Sermons—Conference in Lynchburg—Transferred to Baltimore Conference without his Consent—Appointed to Fredericksburg—Refuses to go—Subsequent Regrets—Gives up the Chaplaincy—Interesting Anecdote—Conference in Raleigh—Goes to Baltimore—Tried and acquitted—Stationed at Annapolis—First Sermon—Death of Bishop Asbury—Mr. Lee's Testimonial of his Worth—Epitaph—General Conference—Presiding Elder Question—Election of Bishop—Mr. Lee among his Flock in Annapolis—Personal Piety—Worship in the Woods—Visits a Camp-Meeting—Last Sermon—Sickness and Death—Reflections—Analysis of his Character—His Conversion and Religious Experience—His Call to the Ministry—Qualifications for the Office, Physical, Mental, and Spiritual—Preaching; Mode of it, Practical and Evangelical—Doctrinal Preaching—His Success, and the Causes of it—Conclusion.

A CONDENSED account of Methodism in Richmond, the scene of Mr. Lee's labours for the year 1812, may very appropriately precede the narrative of his pastoral labours after his return from the General Conference. "Richmond and Manchester," as a distinct appointment, first appears in the Minutes in 1793. It was then discontinued as a separate pastoral charge until 1799. In the former year, Josiah Askew was the Preacher; in the latter, Thomas Lyell. At what period the first Society was formed, we have not been able to ascertain. It was probably some time previous to 1793. Williamsburg circuit, which for several years subsequent to 1790 comprehended Richmond, was formed in 1785, and Hanover circuit, also adjoining the city, was formed in 1786. It is therefore probable that the ministers of these circuits were in the habit of visiting and preaching in the city from the time of their formation. Some time previous to 1793 a family of English emigrants had

settled in Richmond, and also a Local Preacher, the Rev. E. Lacy, from the country adjacent to the city. Of the family referred to, Mrs. Parrott and her daughter had been Methodists in England. These, it is believed, were the first who entered into the fellowship of Methodism in the place. To meet their spiritual wants, and to bring the blessings of the common salvation to as many as might be called of God through them, the ministers of Williamsburg circuit had, with the consent of the magistrates, been preaching for some time in the county Court-House. But on the occurrence of a revival, limited in its influence and brief in its continuance, with no small stir of excitement and noise, the magistrates became alarmed, and forbade them the use of the house. They returned again to the common west of the present Capitol. At this juncture of affairs, Mrs. Parrott, who seems to have been a woman of deep piety and great perseverance, having a large stable on her premises, fitted up an apartment in one end of it, as a place for preaching. This Stable-Church was situated on Main street, just in the rear of the spot now occupied by the Mansion House. Here Mr. Askew commenced his labours, as Preacher for Richmond and Manchester in 1793; and many worthy men, among them M'Kendree, and it is believed Ashury, preached in that humble but blessed place of worship. It soon became too small for the crowds desiring to hear these servants of the Most High God, and the magistrates again gave them permission to occupy the Court-House. In 1796, it is believed, Dr. Coke visited Richmond, and spent several days in nearly a vain effort to raise funds for the erection of a Church. He was only partially successful; and after he left the city, an attempt to augment the amount by investing it in a business house, resulted in the loss of nearly all he had collected. From the Baltimore Conference of 1799, Bishop Asbury sent Mr. Lyell, a minister of fine address and popular talents, to the infant Society in Richmond. In those days religion was a very unfashionable thing in the metropolis of Virginia. There were but two houses of worship in the city. St. John's Church, on Church Hill, an old Colonial structure, had a resident minister, but he only preached in the Parish Church three times a year—at Christmas, and the Sunday of the Easter and Whitsuntide Festivals—just often enough to prevent the alienation of the Glebe lands belonging to the parish. Once a month he

preached in the Capitol. There was also a small Baptist church, regularly occupied, near the present site of the Penitentiary. Soon after his arrival in Richmond, Mr. Lyell commenced a subscription to build a Church. He also preached every Sabbath afternoon in the Capitol. His pleasing manners and oratorical powers soon made him a great favourite with all classes of citizens, and gave him success in his enterprise; and before his year had expired, his Church was erected, dedicated; and, what was a strange thing for the times, opened for service three times on the Sabbath, and once at night, during the week. It was in this house Bishop Asbury preached his last sermon. The Society had increased, and it was soon blessed with a gracious revival of religion. The progress of the Church was subsequently arrested by uniting it with the circuit, and thereby depriving it of the healthful influence always found in connexion with systematic pastoral supervision. In 1808, Richmond was again made a station, and the Church was again prosperous. Between this period and 1812, a new house of worship was erected in the western part of the city, distant nearly a mile from the church of 1800; and the Society numbered 256 whites and 47 coloured. At this time the Methodists were greatly in advance of the other denominations. Within the period embraced in this narrative, about 1803, the Baptists had moved more into the city, and built a house of worship, on Broad street, now constituting the African Baptist Church. The burning of the theatre in 1811 galvanized the Common Hall into a semblance of piety, and with a supreme disregard of the rights of the whole people, they employed the public funds in purchasing the site of the theatre, erecting a Monumental Church on its ruins, and subsequently presenting it to the exclusive use and ownership of the Episcopalians. In 1812, the Rev. John H. Rice was called by a few friends of the Presbyterian Church to reside in the city, and commenced preaching in the Masonic Hall, formed a Church, and erected a house in the valley, long known as the "Pine Apple Church;" since owned by the Episcopalians, and called Christ's Church. Such is a brief statement of the condition of the four leading religious denominations of Richmond, at the time Mr. Lee was appointed to the pastoral oversight of the Methodists in the city.

On his return from the General Conference, he resumed his pas-

toral work with his usual diligence and devotion. With his colleague he alternated, preaching at one Church in the morning, at the other in the afternoon. Pastoral visiting, and from house to house, was attended to by both; but the government of the Church rested on his shoulders. One who knew him well at this period of his life, and was a witness of his labour in the ministry, bears the following testimony of his diligence and industry: "He was certainly the most laborious Preacher we ever had. During the summer months he constantly preached four times on the Sabbath, and attended meeting almost every night in the week. His practice was, when he preached on Shockoe Hill in the afternoon, immediately after service in the Church, to go to Buchannan's Spring, where there was generally a large company of idlers, and mounting a table, he would preach a sermon appropriate to their circumstances. And when he was in Old Town Church in the afternoon, after service, he would repair to a vacant lot opposite old St. John's, and beneath the shade of the venerable oaks, one of which is still standing, then occupying the place, he would gather the crowds from the grave-yard, and the houses near at hand, and preach the gospel of the grace of God with a full heart and a ready utterance." A gentleman capable of judging, said of his ministry: "When Mr. Lee commences his sermon, it always reminds me of the hoisting of the flood-gate of a mill; there is one incessant pouring of the sweetest eloquence I ever heard from any man in my life." This is the general testimony of those who waited upon his ministry. With such powers of pleasing, united to his deep experience of the things of God, it cannot surprise us to know that of those who, under the circumstances referred to, sought to while away a Sabbath afternoon, many were attracted to his side, and there learned duly to appreciate the things belonging to their peace in this world, and their safety in that which is to come.

Besides these demands upon his time and strength, Mr. Lee also laboured to promote the spiritual interests of the convicts in the Penitentiary. From the completion of this Institution, and as soon as it was tenanted by prisoners, the Methodist ministers of Richmond had cared for their souls. In 1808 there were about one hundred and thirty in confinement; and the Rev. Stith Mead, then stationed in the city, took them under his especial supervision.

He either preached himself, or sent some one else to preach to them on the Sabbath. He also furnished them with religious books. It was not long before the good effects of this concern for their spiritual welfare began to manifest itself. A revival of religion ensued, and many of the convicts, after deep penitence and sincere prayer, made a profession of religion, "and gave a very satisfactory account of a change of heart." Mr. Lee\* says: "Prayer was attended to by them, in their rooms; and they were frequently engaged in singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, as well as praying, until the whole circular building was made to resound with the high praises of God. . . . I visited them myself, and talked with many of them, and could not doubt of the reality of their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Thirty or more are supposed to have made a good profession during this revival. The care thus commenced for these outcasts of society, had been continued by the successors of Mr. Mead; and such a cause could not decline in the hands of Mr. Lee. He cherished for it the ardour of a sincere attachment, and sought even there to build up the great temple of God, or to gather thence living stones for its strength and adorning. Hitherto the Methodists had met with no competitors for this crown of glory and rejoicing. They only visited Christ in this *prison*, and ministered unto him in his members. But others were to participate in this labour of love. Let us review the matter, since it presents Mr. Lee in a new and more interesting point of light. In 1812, the Penitentiary was one of the regular preaching-places of the Richmond station; and accordingly it was supplied regularly either by Mr. Lee, his colleague, or one of the Local Preachers, of whom there were several very effective ones in the city. On one occasion, when one of these ministers reached the place he was surprised to find the Rev. Mr. Rice preaching to the convicts, but still more astonished when, at the close of his sermon, he told the convicts he was happy to inform them that the Executive of the state was about to make arrangements to supply them with regular preaching. He then retired from the prison. After he left, the Methodist minister attended to his duty of ministration, and returning to the city

\* Hist. Methodists, p. 353-4.

reported the affair to Mr. Lee. It was a matter of no small joy to him to know that now at length the state, in the person of its Chief Magistrate, was about to evince a becoming attention to this necessitous class of its population. He determined, however, at once to fathom the matter, and acquaint himself with the mystery of this new zeal. Accordingly, the next day he waited on the Governor, and after stating his business, and showing the length of time the Methodists had been engaged in supplying the spiritual wants of the prisoners, he requested to know the nature of the arrangements about to be made for their future care. He was assured by Mr. Barbour that no arrangements had been made, nor would the Executive make any; that he, Mr. Lee, might regulate the business as he pleased, as, in his judgment, it was a work of charity that belonged exclusively to the ministry. Leaving the Governor, Mr. Lee addressed a note to each of the ministers of the different Churches in the city, inviting them to a conference on the subject. Two only complied with the invitation, the pastors of the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches. After a full statement of the object of the meeting, the cause moving him to seek it, and of his interview with the Governor, and assuring them the Methodists had no desire to monopolize a work so important in itself and so full of benevolence in its aims and effects, he invited them to participate in the duty and glory of visiting these prisoners, and of carrying to them the water and the bread of life. This they consented to do, and each pledged himself to supply one Sabbath of every month; and Mr. Lee agreeing to see the remaining Sabbaths filled. Perhaps the arrangement lasted two months—not longer; the whole was devolved upon the Methodists, and was faithfully discharged for several succeeding years, when so many obstacles were thrown in the way of the service by the Superintendent, that even the persevering Methodists were compelled to abandon a field wherein they laboured with the dignity of a true zeal for “those for whom Christ died,” and with a manly independence that looked for its reward not in the praise of men, but in the honour that descends from God.

In September of this year, Mr. Lee attended a camp-meeting in one of the adjoining counties, below Richmond, and contiguous to James River. It was during the war, and a considerable number

of merchant vessels had been run up the river to avoid the English cruisers hovering about the coast. The meeting was progressing in good style, when one night, after the service had concluded, and the people had retired to their tents, a large party of sailors, headed by a Captain Swift, and all well under the maddening influence of strong drink, came upon the ground, full of evil intent, and evidently determined upon a row. The ministers were all in bed; but the noise made by the drunken sailors prevented all chance of sleep. It was midnight; and instead of abatement of the disturbance, it rather grew worse. At this stage of the affair, Mr. Lee left his bed; and inviting two or three others to join him, they hastily dressed themselves, and went out among the crowd. Others from the tents and the neighbourhood were mingled with the sailors—a large and noisy crowd. Followed by his companions, Mr. Lee went into the stand; and addressing the multitude, told them if they would come under the harbour they would have a sermon. A burst of noisy merriment followed this announcement; but the leader, with a mock gravity, came in, and the rest accompanied him, and were soon seated. When all was still, Mr. Lee told the Rev. P. Courtney to preach them a sermon. Surprised, but willing, and not knowing whereunto the thing would grow, he complied, and took for his text the very appropriate words: *At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God.* He had not been long preaching, before a change came over the spirit of that reckless crowd of men. The dimly lighted grove, the hush of the night, the heavy tones of the Preacher's voice, the cold autumnal air, and the stupifying effects of their potations, soon induced drowsiness, and this was succeeded by the deep and dreamless sleep of drunkenness. The infection spread rapidly; it was soon general; all were asleep. The Preacher was careering on, midway in his discourse, when a pull at the tail of his coat brought him rather suddenly to a halt. "Stop!" said Mr. Lee. Then pausing to see if any missed the sound, and no one stirring, he picked up his hat, saying, "Softly!—let's go to bed," and led the way back to the tent. The next morning, chilled to the bone, and stiff in every muscle, the sailors might be seen bending over the camp-fires, with "curses not loud, but deep," against the man that befooled them, drunk as they

were, into listening to a midnight sermon! Ere the trumpet called the worshippers to public prayers, the sailors had disappeared from the encampment, and came no more to disturb its hallowed employments.

Other incidents, showing the nature of Mr. Lee's devotedness to duty, his address in the spiritual management of the Church, and his constant efforts to do good, while labouring in this city, might be given; but they are scarcely necessary to the delineation of his character, and would swell the records of his life to an unreasonable extent. In the midst of his pastoral duties, in December, he received intelligence from Washington of his re-election to the Chaplaincy in the House of Representatives. The fact was as unexpected to him, as the circumstances were creditable and gratifying. He had not sought the office, probably from a desire to "please his brethren for their good, to edification;" and certainly, because he could find in the pastoral relation, employment enough for all his energies of soul and body; and he was happy in his work. For this proof of respect and confidence from the Representatives of the people, he felt a sincere gratitude. But he felt an increasing interest in his duties as a Christian pastor; and at this period especially, he was desirous of giving his whole time and all his powers to the service of the Church. In this state of mind, he for some time hesitated to accept the appointment; but after seeking direction in prayer, and taking the best counsel his circumstances would admit, he finally concluded to regard it as providential, and, as one of life's allotments, to enter upon its duties. With the privileges of social intercourse, and the appropriate daily and Sabbath duties of the office, he could get along well enough; but the profanity of some of the members, and the customs and ceremonies sometimes demanded of the Chaplain, were a grievance to his righteous soul. On the occasion of the burial of a member, it was the office of the Chaplain to precede the procession on horseback, with white hatbands and scarf floating in the wind, and trailing quite to his feet. This was a sore evil; a formality that found not a solitary element of affinity in his nature. He loathed it: and it constituted an additional sorrow at every occurrence of the death of a member in his department of Congress. It is related as an incident of this portion of his history, that once, on the adjournment of Congress, he was



returning to Virginia in a stage filled with members—and long since that period the road has been celebrated as the worst in the Union—and the stage settled in a mudhole so deep and adhesive as to defy all the strength of the horses to pull it out. In this state of the case the passengers had to leave the stage, and after prying it out, had to walk some distance to relieve it. On resuming their seats, the Chaplain had not succeeded in bringing his two hundred and fifty-nine pounds of flesh through the mud of the road-side. When he entered, and ere he was fairly seated, one of them asked, “where the Chaplain was when they were getting the stage out of the mud!” and a merry joke passed round at his expense. He bore it with great good humour till one of them said, “It was rather unkind of their Chaplain to stay with them when all was quiet and smooth, and then desert them as the storm and trial came on!” “Ah, gentlemen,” said Mr. Lee, “I intended to help you, but some of you swore so hard, I went out behind a tree and prayed for you.” The truth of the remark, and the mild honesty of the rebuke, had the effect not only to silence them for the time, but to impose a restraint upon their profanity the rest of the journey.

In February, Mr. Lee attended the Virginia Conference in Newbern, North Carolina. Of the session, Bishop Asbury says: “We had great order, great union, and great despatch of business. The increase in membership, this year, is seven hundred: but, ah! deaths and locations—then the Preachers!” Were the Preachers more choice in their appointments? Bishop Asbury once, while lamenting the decline of zeal in this Conference, was heard to say: “The time was, when if I said in the Conference, I want a Preacher to go to Boston or Maine, Jesse Lee would respond, ‘Here am I; send me.’ Or to the Northwest Territory, William M’Kendree was ready.” Doubtless the stock of such self-denying men was not entirely exhausted. The exigency of these times did not demand them. During this Conference, Mr. Lee preached a sermon, the recollection of which, for its character and results, yet lives in the community. His text was Acts xvii. 6: *These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.* His propositions were curious, and well calculated to attract the attention of a promiscuous assembly, such as generally greets a great ministerial gathering. They were: “I. That when God made

the world, he placed it right-side up. II. That by the introduction of sin, it has been 'turned *upside* down.' And, III. It is the business of the ministry to turn it back again to its original position." From these words, he taught the whole plan of saving mercy. In the *first*, the purity and perfection of man in his original state. In the *second*, the awful and total depravity of the fall, "the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." In the *third*, the gracious economy of the gospel, in the recovery of mankind by the atonement of Christ, and the ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors of God, preaching peace by the cross. Quaint as are the propositions, the sermon was mighty through God. It produced a deep and living impression upon the minds of many. But a singular visible effect was attributed to it by certain men mighty in works of darkness. The next morning the town, through all its parts, presented a laughable spectacle of things "upside down." Carriages and all kinds of vehicles were bottom up. Boats drawn from the water were lying about, keel uppermost. Small houses upturned, signs, boxes, gates, wrong-end foremost, upside down; and, in a word, everything was out of fix, and the whole town was one scene of confusion. Some were fretted at the injury sustained; others had trouble and inconvenience; but all seemed to enjoy the joke, especially when the supposed actors insisted that it was all done by the Preachers. "Didn't the Preacher say they were the men 'that turned the world upside down,'" and had they not come here to put the town "right-side up!" This was giving his sermon a *literal* sense, and a *practical* application never contemplated by the Preacher; and which is not yet forgotten by the elder citizens of Newbern.

Mr. Lee was appointed to Brunswick circuit, but it is probable he spent very little time at his regular work, either during this or the succeeding year. In December 1813, he was again elected Chaplain, and continued in Washington during the winter; and at the extra session, in May 1814, he was again installed as pastor of the House of Representatives. This session continued until August; and, on the reassembling of the regular Congress in December, he was elected Chaplain to the Senate. While not occupied at the Seat of Government, engaged in the important duties of his station,

made more especially so by the critical and anxious condition of the country, in the midst of the disastrous war with Great Britain, he busied himself in filling his appointments on his respective circuits. In February 1814, Conference was held in Norfolk. We find no records of importance to the Church, in the very brief notices of its proceedings that have fallen under our observation. That there were "debates" in the Conference, and "strifes" in the Society, that occasioned "sorrow of heart" to many faithful ones, is perhaps so certain, that it is better to leave them among forgotten things, than to quicken them into life by searching too narrowly into their history. Let them sleep, without hope of resurrection. At this Conference, Mr. Lee was appointed to the "Cumberland and Manchester" circuit; but, as already stated, a large portion of the year was spent in his public duties in Congress. During this year, he brought through the press two sermons: one, a funeral discourse, preached in commemoration of the pious devotion of Miss Hardy, of Bertie, North Carolina; the other, on the duty of Christian watchfulness. Both are good; the latter excellent—replete with sound views of the subject, exhibiting a clear perception of religious experience, and abounding in just and solid admonitions as to the importance of the duty, and the great danger of neglecting to "watch in all things." This was a favourite subject with Mr. Lee; and his sermon was a compendium of his own daily observance of the duty; and of its blessedness to his own soul in keeping alive the flame of a devout and joyous communion with God. In the records of his life during the years here so summarily despatched, we find all the traits of that deep and uniform piety of heart, and all the proofs of an anxious and supreme desire to do good, for which his life heretofore has been so eminent. Holy love was a vestal fire that, from its first kindling, had sent its pure flame through every pulse of his life. Watching unto prayer, and "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith," were the heaven-inspired means of keeping alive the holy fire in the holy place of his heart. In life's youthful prime it had been placed on the altar of his soul; in manhood's trials and troubles it had burned with an ever-during brightness; and now that he was descending the vale of years, its light was

about his path, and the valley of the shadow of death was growing bright in its beams.

In February 1815, the Virginia Conference was held in Lynchburg. During the session, Bishop Asbury stated it as the wish of the people of Baltimore that Mr. Lee should be sent to labour in that city; and he gave it as his own conviction that it was the most appropriate and promising place for the exercise of his ministry. The statement did not elicit remark, and it passed off as a mere expression of opinion, without any thought that it was to enter into the arrangements for the year. The Bishop, who was quite indisposed during the Conference, was scarcely able to read out the appointments, and he devolved that duty upon the Rev. J. Early. To the surprise of the reader and the Conference, the name of Mr. Lee was not in the appointments. In a note at the foot was the following announcement: "Jesse Lee will receive his appointment at the Baltimore Conference." Surprised, but neither mortified nor offended, but yet only acquiescing upon the ground of the statement made in the Conference, Mr. Lee maintained a manly silence, except that he approached the reader, and asked, "Is that right?" referring to the fact of being transferred without notice or consultation. Still, it is believed, he was willing to comply with what he and others regarded as the object of the Bishop in removing him from a Conference to which he was so strongly attached, and in which he was so deservedly held in the highest estimation. In a few weeks he received a letter from the Baltimore Conference, informing him he was appointed to Fredericksburg. This arrangement was contrary to all the expectations he had been led to entertain; it was a total disappointment, and he refused to accede to the plan. This was the first and only instance of his life, in which he refused obedience to those who had the charge and government over him. But the case, in view of all the circumstances, will admit of a very strong plea in its justification. Yet, as he did not justify it, although at first he believed he was right in refusing, and as he subsequently deeply regretted the act, especially as it might prove an evil example to the younger ministers, we will unite in regretting the refusal, and forbear either to extenuate or defend it. But a just regard to an after fact in the history of Mr. Lee, will not allow us to leave the subject at this point. Mr. Lee was not a

member of the General Conference of 1816; and the fact, however it may have affected the Church, is traceable directly to this act of the Bishop. After his removal from Virginia, his brethren there did not feel free to elect him as their representative; and it is believed, upon very creditable authority, his transfer to the Baltimore Conference was anything but pleasing to those who aspired to be leaders in the body, and their whole influence would very naturally turn against the election of one who, to the disadvantage of being a new comer, superadded that of a class of talents, experience in legislation, and general popularity, that would make him, like Saul, "a head and shoulders" higher than his compeers. After making due allowance for human nature, it cannot surprise us that Mr. Lee was left out of that delegation. But we must advance a step further in the history of this affair: Mr. Lee never ceased to believe that it was to prevent his election to the General Conference of 1816, that he was transferred from among his brethren to membership among comparative strangers. It is due to his memory to state the fact. But we are under no obligation to maintain its correctness. Indeed, at this distance of time, and possessed of facts that may never have come to his knowledge, and under influences not only less exciting, but freer from prejudice, we can examine the subject with more calmness and greater freedom of investigation. We have already seen in a preceding chapter, that the residence of Mr. Lee in Washington was displeasing to his brethren of the Conference, and there is good reason to believe that it was to provide for this contingency that the Bishop wished to place him contiguous to the seat of government; and that he was frustrated in his purpose to station him in Baltimore, by the influences heretofore referred to as opposing his return to the General Conference. We must admit the fact of an honest but mistaken conviction, on the one side; or embrace an opinion, on the other, repugnant to all our views and feelings of the integrity of the Bishop, and not authorized by any known act of his life. Acknowledging the right of the Bishop, under our economy, to transfer, we yet think it ought never to be done without the consent of the party; and in the case before us, we are persuaded it ought not to have been done at all, after it was found that the implied engagement as to the place of labour could not be complied with. It was this, rather than anything else, that caused Mr. Lee,

the only time in his life, to hesitate in obeying the directions of his chief pastor.

But, although he persisted in his refusal to go to Fredericksburg, he was not idle. From choice he retired from an office in Congress, which he had occupied so many years with equal credit to himself and satisfaction to the representatives of the nation. It should no longer be a stumbling-block to his brethren. If he might "please them for their good to edification," in a less prominent sphere of life, he would "choose it rather," and thereby give them a proof of his humbleness of mind that would rebuke while it enlightened, and subdue while building up in the strength of fervent faith and swelling joy. During the year he was diligently employed in travelling and preaching through the Meherrin district, assisting those in charge at their appointments, and filling many made exclusively for himself. He extended his visit to Norfolk, and finished the Ecclesiastical year on the Brunswick circuit, acting as the substitute or colleague of the Rev. C. S. Mooring. It was in the latter part of this year Mr. Lee became conscious that his health was failing. He was more easily effected by changes of the weather, and more frequently afflicted. After mentioning a night of indisposition, he says: "These afflictions of the Lord are designed for my good, perhaps, to give me notice that my departure is at hand. Lord sanctify them to my spiritual welfare." As the winter came on, his afflictions increased, he was confined to his room, and compelled to resort to medicine. But he was unmoved by these premonitions of dissolution. In all of them he committed himself unto "God, as unto a faithful Creator."

It was during this year that an incident occurred which exhibits Mr. Lee's character in a most interesting point of light, and powerfully portrays the effect of "a soft answer *in* turning away wrath." Until within a few years, this anecdote was known only to a few of his immediate relatives. That it may lose nothing of its interest, we establish its authenticity. It was communicated to a member of the family, under the following circumstances, by the individual most involved in the affair. Some few years since, a nephew of Mr. Lee, engaged in some business transaction in a store in Petersburg, Virginia, and being addressed as Mr. Lee, attracted the attention of an aged gentleman, General Pegram, at the same time in the

store, who immediately accosted him, and asked if he was a kinsman of the Rev. Jesse Lee. On being informed that he was a nephew, the old General said he had long desired to see some member of the old minister's family, in order to communicate a circumstance that once occurred between himself and Mr. Lee. On being assured that it would afford him pleasure to hear anything concerning his venerable relative, General P. proceeded to relate in substance the following narrative :

" When I was a young man, I went to hear Mr. Lee preach at ——— Meeting-House. There was a very large crowd in attendance, and a great many could not get in the house. Among others, I got near the door; and being fond of show and frolic, I indulged in some indiscretion, for which Mr. Lee mildly but plainly reproved me. In an instant all the bad feelings of my heart were roused. I was deeply insulted, and felt that my whole family was disgraced. I retired from the crowd to brood over the insult, and meditate revenge. It was not long before I resolved to whip him before he left the ground. I kept the resolution to myself; and watched, with the eager intensity of resentment, the opportunity to put it in execution. But the congregation was dismissed and dispersed, and I saw nothing of the Preacher. How he escaped me I could never learn. I looked on every hand, scrutinized every departing group; but saw nothing of the man I felt I hated, and was resolved to whip. I went home sullen, mortified, and filled with revenge. My victim had escaped me. But I 'nursed my wrath to keep it warm;' and cherished the determination to put it into execution the first time I saw Mr. Lee, although long years should intervene. Gradually, however, my feelings subsided, and my impressions of the insult became weaker and less vivid; and in the lapse of a few years, the whole affair faded away from my mind. Thirteen years passed over me; and the impetuosity of youth had been softened down by the footprints of sober manhood, and gradually approaching age. I was standing upon 'the downhill of life.' On a beautiful morning in the early spring, I left my residence to transact some business in Petersburg; and on reaching the main road leading to town, I saw, a few hundred yards before me, an elderly looking man jogging slowly along in a single gig. As soon as I saw him, it struck me, 'that's Jesse Lee.' The name,

the man, the sight of him, recalled all my recollections of the insult, and all my purposes of resentment. I strove to banish them all from my mind. I reasoned on the long years that had intervened since the occurrence; the impropriety of thinking of revenge, and the folly of executing a purpose formed in anger, and after so long a lapse of time. But the more I thought, the warmer I became. My resolution stared me in the face; and something whispered coward in my heart, if I failed to fulfil it. My mind was in a perfect tumult, and my passions waxed strong. I determined to execute my resolution to the utmost; and full of rage I spurred my horse, and was soon at the side of the man that I felt of all others I hated most.

"I accosted him rather rudely with the question: 'Are you not a Methodist Preacher?'"

"'I pass for one,' was the reply, and in a manner that struck me as very meek.

"'An't your name Jesse Lee?'"

"'Yes; that's my name.'"

"'Do you recollect preaching in the year — at — Meeting-House?'"

"'Yes; very well.'"

"'Well, do you recollect reproving a young man on that occasion for some misbehaviour?'"

"'After a short pause, for recollection, he replied, 'I do.'"

"'Well,' said I, 'I am that young man; and I determined that I would whip you for it the first time I saw you. I have never seen you from that day until this; and now I intend to execute my resolution, and whip you.'"

"As soon as I finished speaking, the old man stopped his horse, and looking me full in the face, said: 'You are a younger man than I am. You are strong and active, and I am old and feeble. I have no doubt but if I were disposed to fight, you could whip me very easily; and it would be useless for me to resist. But as a "man of God I must not strive." So, as you are determined to whip me, if you will just wait, I will get out of my gig, and get down on my knees, and you may whip me as long as you please.'"

"Never," said the old General, "was I so suddenly and powerfully affected. I was completely overcome. I trembled from head to



foot. I would have given my estate if I had never mentioned the subject. A strange weakness came over my frame. I felt sick at heart; ashamed, mortified, and degraded. I dismounted, took his hand, and with tears begged him to forgive me for having treated him so rudely and unworthily.\* This he did with great cheerfulness, and soon made me feel at ease in his company. We rode together to town; and there he would not allow me to leave him, taking me, by a persuasion I could not resist, to the house of his brother, and entertaining me there, until my business was concluded, with the cordiality of a long-cherished friendship. We parted with deep emotion on my part; I to my family, he to his Master's work. I have never seen him since. He has long since passed away from the earth; and has reaped the reward of the good, the gentle, and the useful, in a world where 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary find eternal rest.'

"I am now old; few and full of evil have been the days of the years of my life, yet I am not now without hope in God. I have made my peace with Him who is the Judge of 'the quick and dead:' and hope ere long to see that good man of God with feelings very different from those with which I met him on that painfully remembered morning."

The old man ceased his narrative. A glow of satisfaction spread over his features, and tears stood in his eyes. He seemed as if a burden was removed from his heart—that he had disencumbered himself of a load that had long pressed upon his spirits. He had given his secret to the near relative of the man he had once intended to injure, but whose memory he now cherished with feelings akin to those that unite the redeemed to each other, and bind the whole to "the Father of the spirits of all flesh."

At the Virginia Conference, held in Raleigh, January 24th, 1816, Mr. Lee took an affectionate leave of his brethren, and repaired to Georgetown, D. C., the seat of the Baltimore Conference, from which, according to his transfer, he was determined to take his

\* This was first published by me in the Richmond Christian Advocate, March 10, 1842. And it has been copied, with my permission, into "Sketches and Incidents," by the Rev. A. Stevens. In both, however, there is an essential error, as to the *flight* of General Pegram. The *true* version, as since corrected by my informant, is given in the text.

appointment. Exceptions were taken against him here, by some one, for his failure to fill the appointment of the preceding year. But he denied their jurisdiction over the town of Fredericksburg, as it was not within their territorial limits; and even if he was amenable to them, *they* had no right to prescribe work for him beyond their jurisdiction. Properly, at the time, and by fair construction of the law defining the boundaries of the Conferences, Fredericksburg was in the Virginia Conference.\* And, apart from the difficulty growing out of his unconsenting transfer, he refused to be considered responsible to them for failing to attend an appointment to which they could not claim just ownership, or legitimate authority. The justness and force of his reasoning may be inferred from the fact that, at the ensuing General Conference, the subject of the boundary was brought under notice, and the words, "except Fredericksburg," added to the law defining the bounds of the Virginia Conference.

At the close of this Conference, Mr. Lee was stationed in Annapolis, the capital of the state. In a few days he was at his appointment, and commenced his ministry by a discourse from Josh. v. 14: *And he said, Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.* In this sermon he defined at some length, and with great pains, the rights, powers, and duties of the Captain of the host of the Lord; compared the office with that held by Joshua; and from the whole pointed out the office and work of a minister while in the pastoral work—caring for "the host of the Lord." Upon this subject he described his own duties, and what the people had a right to expect from him, and what were their rights and privileges as members of the host. In conclusion, he told them to remember especially, in their manifold relations, and mutual duties, that *he was CAPTAIN!* As Captain and *servant*, devoting himself with untiring zeal for their spiritual welfare, he entered upon his pastoral relations and duties; preaching, attending class and prayer-meetings, and visiting the flock at their own homes, filled up nearly all the intervals of time that could be spared from important personal duties. Though he was in the downhill of life, and not as

\* In 1796, the "Northern Neck" was included in the Baltimore Conference. And although it supplied Fredericksburg, yet it was not *legally* in its bounds until 1816.

robust in health and strength as in former years, yet, with special reference to his spiritual engagements, it may be said, "his natural force was not abated." His heart was still young, his feelings ardent, and his desire "to do good and to communicate," as unquenchable as when, in his early ministry, he waded through snow-drifts in New England to notify the people of his intention to preach at candle-light.

In the midst of these arrangements for a year of toil for the good of Zion, and in the buoyancy of hope that God would mercifully visit the Church with his quickening influences, he was grieved to hear of, and united to bewail the great loss of the Church in the death of Bishop Asbury. This mournful event took place on Sunday, the 31st of March, 1816, near Fredericksburg, Va. For some time his health had been failing. Yet he stopped not in his travels and duties till the wheels of life stood still. His last sermon was preached in the old Methodist Church, in Richmond, on the preceding Sabbath, from Rom. ix. 28. He was so infirm that he had to sit on a table during its delivery; and was compelled frequently to pause for the recovery of his breath, yet he preached nearly an hour. It was a solemn scene. The audience were deeply affected. There are some yet lingering behind who recollect the occasion and its impressiveness. In the death of the Bishop, Mr. Lee felt as if a friend had been smitten down at his side. "The estimation in which he held the character of this great and good man may be seen in the following extract of a biographical sketch which he wrote and published soon after he received the news of his death." After stating the date of his birth, entrance in the ministry, arrival in America, consecration as Superintendent, &c., Mr. Lee proceeds to give the annexed eulogy of his character:

"In February 1785, he visited Charleston, South Carolina, for the first time. In 1787, he was the first time called *Bishop*, in the Form of Discipline. He acted as Superintending Bishop for thirty-one years and a few months; in which time he attended about two hundred and seventy Conferences, and appointed all the Preachers to the different circuits. It is supposed that he ordained, in all, three thousand ministers, including Travelling and Local Preachers. He travelled through seventeen of the United States, and some of the territories. He was always of a slender constitution,

and yet never spared himself, but ventured through the greatest difficulties and dangers, in order to preach to the people and attend to the Preachers. He was an excellent Preacher; and his gift in prayer was exceedingly great. He was deeply pious, remarkably fervent and constant in prayer. His peculiar talent was for governing the Preachers, and taking care of the Church of Christ. He generally rose early in the morning, travelled many miles in a day, preached often, and slept but little. He was generally known throughout the United States, much esteemed, and greatly beloved. His presence was generally courted, his advice requested, and his directions attended to. It pleased God to spare him for many years; and, at last, to give him an easy, safe, and happy passage out of this world. And his numerous friends have no room to doubt but that their loss is his infinite gain. He has not left behind him many, if any, to equal him in the Church to which he belonged. And notwithstanding his loss is, and will be greatly lamented, we have full confidence in the Lord that he will take care of and provide for his Church."

One of the first acts of the General Conference of 1816, was to provide for the removal of the body of the deceased Bishop to Baltimore, and its interment there in its last resting-place, under the pulpit in Eutaw Street Church. On this occasion a large procession, composed of the ministry and laity of the Church, followed the remains from the Conference room to the place of sepulture, where a sermon was preached by Bishop M'Kendree, and the body was lowered into the grave, to

"Wait God's voice to rouse its tomb,  
With sweet salvation in the sound."

Mr. Lee, with a deep and profound sorrow, united in these funeral rites. Mr. Thrift, who walked with him in the procession, says: "The scene was solemn and impressive. Mr. Lee's countenance bespoke the emotions of his mind. A dignified sorrow, such as veterans feel, while following to the grave an old companion in arms, was evinced by his words and countenance. They had suffered together, and had long fought in the same ranks; the one had gained his crown, the other was soon to receive it." In the rear wall of the building, on the outside, a marble tablet may

still be seen, bearing a simple but just inscription to the memory of the first, and still unsurpassed, Chief Pastor of the American Methodist Church. It is in these words :

S A C R E D  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
THE REVEREND FRANCIS ASBURY,  
BISHOP OF THE  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

He was born in England, August 20th, 1745 ;  
Entered the Ministry at the age of 17 ;  
Came a Missionary to America, 1771 ;  
Was ordained Bishop in this city, December 27th, 1784 ;  
Annually visited the Conferences in the United States ;  
With much zeal continued to "preach the word,"  
FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY ;

And

Literally ended his labours with his life, near *Fredericksburg, Virginia*, in the full triumphs of faith, on the 31st of March, 1816,  
Aged 70 years, 7 months, and 11 days.  
His remains were deposited in this vault, May 10th, 1816, by the General Conference then sitting in this city.  
His Journals will exhibit to posterity his labours, his difficulties, his sufferings, his patience, his perseverance, his love to God and man.

Though, for reasons heretofore mentioned, Mr. Lee had not the honour of membership in the General Conference, he was not an indifferent spectator of its proceedings. He waited upon its sessions with the anxiety of one who knew the interests at stake, and who greatly desired the prosperity and holiness of the Church. We may not follow its daily history. One only subject will we introduce, one with which Mr. Lee was identified, and whose history we desire to keep parallel with his, at least till the close of this session, and thus show its condition at the time of the death of one of its warmest friends and ablest advocates : We mean the Presiding Elder question. On the 7th of May, Samuel Merwin offered to amend the Discipline, respecting the mode of appointing Presiding Elders, so as to read :

"Ques. 1. How shall the Presiding Elders be appointed ?

*Ans.* At an early period of each Annual Conference the Bishop shall nominate a person for each district that is to be supplied; and the Conference shall without debate proceed in the choice, the person nominated being absent; and if the person nominated be not chosen according to nomination, the Bishop shall nominate two others, one of whom it shall be the duty of the Conference to choose.

*Ques. 2.* By whom shall the Preachers be appointed to their stations?

*Ans.* By the Bishop, with the advice and counsel of the Presiding Elders."

Subsequently, the Rev. Nathan Bangs offered to amend the first answer by adding to it the following words:

"And the Presiding Elder so elected and appointed shall remain in office four years, unless sooner dismissed by the mutual consent of the Bishop and Conference, or is elected to some other office by the General Conference. But no Presiding Elder shall be removed from office during the term of four years without his consent; unless the reasons for such removal be stated to him in presence of the Conference, which shall decide without debate on his case."

In the close of the discussion, the whole subject was lost by a vote of 42 to 60. Thus showing a considerable majority on the *right* side of the question, although confessedly, we believe, not on the *strong* side in the debate.

To supply the lack of service occasioned by the death of Bishop Asbury, and to meet the constantly augmenting demand upon Episcopal labour in every section of the Church, the Conference resolved to strengthen the Episcopacy by the addition of two Bishops. And the fact that Rev. Messrs. George and Roberts had the one 57 votes out of 106, and the other 55, will show, if not the unanimity of the body, their generally acknowledged worthiness, and the high appreciation of their characters by the Conference. Their long, laborious, and useful lives constitute a sufficient justification of the selection.

After the General Conference, Mr. Lee returned to his station, and resumed his labours with greater diligence than ever. From the grave of his old companion and friend a voice of quickening came to his soul, crying, What thou doest, do quickly! The night

is far spent, the day is at hand. It was a voice from the wilderness—Prepare ye the way of the Lord. It came to stir up his energies, to stimulate his zeal, to inflame him with love for those for whom Christ died. It came with its light, and joy, and hope, to cheer him in his toil, and open to his vision of faith the vast reward that waited him, when he too should pass through the gates into the Holy City—the residence of those who shall be counted worthy to be kings and priests unto God. But, while striving with his utmost zeal to build up others in the faith of Christ, he could not forget the pressing claims of his own soul. He needed the full clothing of salvation; his house must be garnitured with holiness; the garments he would wear in unfading whiteness, must be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Instinct with zeal for others, is there no danger of overlooking one's own personal growth in grace? He knew there was; and he feared to encounter the dangers crowding the Watchman's path, without frequent retirement for holy meditation and humble prayer. As he neared the long solitude of the grave, he grew fonder of retiring from the busy scenes of life; and alone, freed from the turmoil and confusion of the thronged city, to give himself up to quiet meditation. Some of those who, at this period, shared his pastoral care, resided in the country adjacent to Annapolis. It was his delight to visit them; and in the seclusion of their families, and in the shade of the old forests about these venerable homesteads, he could find the opportunities for quiet retirement that he always loved, and now so greatly desired. A saint in town, is twice a saint in the country. It was the custom of our fathers to retire to the woods at the close of the day, whenever their circumstances allowed it, for the purpose of prayer. Here, at the footstool of the Highest, with the heart modulated by the harmonies of nature, and the feelings all quickened by the hymning worship that, in the hush of the twilight, ascends softly and sublimely to the throne of the Creator, the man of earth catches the echoes of the coming eternity, and mingles his own voice of praise with "the concord of sweet sounds," ascending up to God from everything that hath the imprint of His hand—a symphony of holy and joyous worship. In these peaceful retreats, he spent as much of his time as his pressing pastoral engagements would allow; and here he sought

full conformity to the image and will of God. And often, as the deepening shades of night came down on the horizon, there was light in his soul, and his heart sung sweet songs of joy in anticipation of soon finishing his sojourn in the wilderness. Indeed, he was on the bank of the river, the Promised Land was in sight, and the path through the waters was opening at his feet, brilliant with celestial glory.

Thus occupied between holy duties and heavenly exercises, he continued to fill his pastoral engagements until the middle of August, with great usefulness to the people, and increasing comfort to his own soul. On the 15th, in the evening, he preached, perhaps, his last sermon to his flock, on 1 Cor. xv. 33; a solemn and most impressive warning against the bad influence of evil associations. A few days after this, he left Annapolis for the purpose of attending a camp-meeting, near Hillsborough, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. On Thursday, the 22d, he preached for the first time at the camp-meeting, from the 1 Pet. ii. 5. It was a profitable discourse—encouraging the faith of Christ's people, and edifying the hearts of those who were looking for the promise of His coming to redeem and save. On the afternoon of Saturday, he again preached. His text was: *But grow in grace*—2 Pet. iii. 18. "This was a favourite text with him, and it was his last." His public work was done. Henceforth, in the few days that remained to him, he could only glorify God by suffering, and in the powerful influence of a holy death. The sermon had a very happy effect upon the multitude of worshippers, especially upon those who "as lively stones" were built upon "the Chief Corner-Stone." Soon after preaching, he was taken with a chill, which in turn was succeeded by a high fever. A restless night on the camp-ground aggravated the disorder, and he was so much worse on the next day, it became necessary to remove him. He was carried to Hillsborough, to the hospitable and Christian home of Mr. Sellers, where everything that medical skill could suggest, or friendship perform, was attempted to mitigate his sufferings, and prolong a life, yet in the noontide of its power and glory, to the Church. But all was ineffectual. He was summoned to a higher position, a holier fellowship. In the first periods of his illness he was depressed in spirits—a cloud was passing through the sky of his soul. He said but little, too profoundly occupied



with the matter of his personal safety to commune with aught beside his own heart and God. For the first time, perhaps, he was alone in his own individuality before God! and he felt the dreariness of a solitude that had no Christ within its circle. He was feeling for Him, and quietly waiting for the promised guidance through the valley of the shadow of death. He was in its darkness, its waves were rushing against him, and its tide bearing him onward to the sea. But there was light on the dark waters—a star came out on the horizon and shone full-orbed upon his soul. It was the bright and morning star. And there it shone till the sky of his soul was refulgent in its beams. For several days preceding his death, he was filled with holy joy. Frequently he cried out, “Glory, glory, glory; Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Jesus reigns!” On another occasion he spoke with great distinctness and deliberation for nearly twenty minutes, giving directions as to his affairs, and sending the assurance that “he died in the Lord,” to comfort the hearts of his distant family. Nor did he forget his fellow-labourers in the Lord. “Give my respects to Bishop M’Kendree,” he said, “and tell him I die in love with all the Preachers; that I love him, and that he lives in my heart.” Having thus finished his work, he said but little more. Calm and composed as hope on the bosom of bliss, he resigned himself into the hands of God, and quietly as an infant sinks to repose on the breast of its mother, he fell asleep on the evening of the 12th of September, 1816.

In the language of the official Minutes, “It is unnecessary to eulogize one, whose labours have extended almost from one end of the United States to the other.

“Our deceased brother was a sound, orthodox Methodist Preacher; and, allowing for the infirmities of human nature, one who sincerely endeavoured to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind.

“We have no doubt he has entered into rest—that he now partakes of that happiness to which he endeavoured to lead others; and if we are faithful we may expect to meet him on that eternal shore, ‘where all is calm and joy and peace.’”

Such is the brief but comprehensive testimonial of the moral worth and useful life of a departed brother, given by those whom he had led forth to deeds of religious heroism; and at whose side he had often and valiantly “contended for the faith once delivered

to the Saints." But he was not. His work was done. A voice from the Upper Sanctuary had said, "It is enough : enter into thy rest, and sit down at my side." Gladly he obeyed the summons ; and joyously he wears the white robe, and sings the new song of heaven.

The remains of Mr. Lee were interred in the old Methodist burying-ground in Baltimore, and there they still "rest in hope;" waiting till summoned from the dust of the earth, a spiritual body, like unto the glorious body of Christ. A plain marble slab bears this inscription :

IN MEMORY OF

THE REV. JESSE LEE.

Born in Prince George County, Va., 1758 ;

Entered the Itinerant Ministry of the M. E. Church, 1783 ; and

Departed this life September 1816,

Aged 58 years.

A man of ardent zeal and great ability as a minister of Christ,  
His labours were abundantly owned of God,  
Especially in the New England States, in which he was truly the  
Apostle of American Methodism.

Our task is nearly completed. A few reflections, suggested by a desire to give practical direction to the impressive facts of the preceding narrative, is all that remains to the fulfilment of our self-assumed and cheerfully performed duty. We have traced the course of one whose life, in an eminent degree, was consecrated to the work of righteousness. From childhood's sunny morn to manhood's evening ray, we have followed his toilsome and self-sacrificing career ; and witnessed, in all its forms and phases, his "labour of love." In the cabin of the frontier emigrant, in the halls of wealth and refinement, in his long solitary rides, in the hours of his heart's holy devotion, in the strife of tongues, in the presence of multitudes, in the pulpit, in the class-room, in debates on the floor of Conference, in public and in private, when men gazed on him and when no eye but God's rested upon him ; in all circumstances we have been witnesses of the thoughts and intentions of his heart. He has affected no concealments, nor sought, in apparent mysteries, to hide real deformities of character. No, all is pure. We have

seen, in the outward clothing, the inward workings of the mind. And we turn from the study of a character so frank, generous, and noble, from a life so unselfish, laborious, and useful, to inquire into the *causes* moving him to a self-sacrifice so magnanimous as marks the chastened outline and fills up and perfects the brilliant picture we have been examining. The answer, to a Christian mind, like the picture itself, is without matter for marvel or mystery. The *cause* operating to produce a character so unique, and results so worthy of commendation, is to be found in that work of the Spirit by which his soul was brought into a life-long sympathy with the sufferings of Jesus Christ; a sympathy that filled him with love for those for whom Christ tasted death, and animated him with a quenchless desire to seek and save them. In this the secret spring of all his movements is developed. Here the mystery begins and terminates. In the presence of his identity of feeling with the Saviour of sinners, all is made plain; and we find, not only reason for his devotion, but an ample justification for his well-tempered and growing zeal. But we may analyze the subject, and, reducing it to its elements, still find the same distinct outlines and general results. The work of the Spirit, to which we refer as the great impulsive cause of all his motions, may be clearly traced in the elevated purity of his religious principles, the tenderness of his pious feelings, the satisfying evidences of a special designation for the ministerial functions, and in those natural endowments of "soul, body, and spirit," which distinguished him from others, and marked him pre-eminently as a man amongst men. Let us, for the sake of a better examination, enlarge these elementary views of his character; and see in miniature the more prominent features of the full-sized portrait spread over the preceding pages.

1. **HIS CONVERSION AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.**—It was while he was yet in the bloom and freshness of youth that he entered into covenant with God. In the fifteenth year of his age he was brought to the perception of his condition as a sinner. Conviction for sin—consciousness of guilt in the sight of God—was wrought in his heart by the Holy Spirit. It was not a transient impression, such as mere natural causes operating upon some peculiar phase of the mind produces, but a strong and abiding conviction of sinfulness and guilt, exciting fear, and foreshadowing condemnation.

He was in constant dread of the penalty denounced against sin. During the prevalence of these feelings he was thoughtful and sad. A cloud was on his spirits. He walked in darkness, and saw no light, except such as gleamed from "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." The revelations of this wrath shed a baleful light upon the path of life. Forced to remember his Creator, he thought of Him with dread. Compelled to look into his own heart, he saw only corruption and guilt; the one enlivening his fears, the other destroying his hope. His soul was in great distress; and sorrow and fear held him as in the embrace of giants. The record of his feelings shows his distress to have been very great, causing him to forsake his customary pursuits, to turn away from the gay circle of social life, and in solitary places and holy exercises to seek after God. Young as he was, he felt himself to be a great sinner. And he feared there was "no place of repentance" for him. But "he sought it carefully with tears," and was mercifully led to find "peace and joy in believing." The bitterness of that "godly sorrow," however strong and permanent the consolation that succeeded it, never faded away from his remembrance. It was a gate of grief to his soul that, having once passed, he never desired to recross. It was a hill of difficulty up whose painful path he had carried a burden of sin, and on whose summit he stood "weary and heavy-laden." But once reached, it was his purpose never to descend; but thenceforth to maintain an onward and upward course through all the fields of duty, till heaven should recompense his pains in the eternal redemption of his soul.

A sense of sin so deep and absorbing, a penitence so profound and pervading as marked the *rise* of religion in his soul, could scarcely issue in anything short of a thorough change of heart. In the progress of this work of grace, his mind was enlightened to discern the things of the Spirit; his moral feelings were quickened into a new spiritual life, and the whole nature was renewed in righteousness, and "transformed in all its powers." His conversion was a genuine birth of the Spirit; a *new birth*, in which the old man was crucified, and all things were made new. He was born of God, and knew God, and loved God; for God is love. The love of God was shed abroad in his heart. It was

upon this foundation he built the temple of God in his soul, and garnished it with the "gold, silver, and precious stones," of a most cheerful and devoted obedience. "Wood, hay, and stubble," were not allowed to sully the fair proportions, or diminish the strength of his Christian edifice. Hence his Christian life was a progressive improvement upon "the first principles of the oracles of God;" his experience of the things of God was sound, expansive, and joyous. Christ was formed in his heart; and the portrait was perfect and life-like. His was a cheerful piety; he was Christ's freedman, and Christ was "all in all" to him. Allegiance to Christ was the law of his life; and it was his delight to do the will of God. These views of his religious character are authorized by all the facts of his interesting and impressive history. His life was a cheerful offering of himself to duty. Labour was rest, and pain was sweet, if Christ was glorified by the toil or the suffering. Beyond this he seems to have had no desire. His ambition was to do good; careless as to where, how, or to whom it was to be done. If he might glorify Christ, Christ might choose the place, and prescribe the means. It was this "sacrifice and service of faith" that made him strong in the Lord, and caused him always to rejoice in Christ Jesus. His dying transport was only a higher quality of the daily comfort with which he always triumphed in the God of his salvation.

It is good to "remember our Creator in the days of our youth." The history we are reviewing furnishes a thousand stirring illustrations of this sound doctrine of the Bible; and is replete with entreaties to follow him as he followed Christ. From every period of his history there comes a commendation of the blessedness, both for safety and consolation, of an early assumption of the yoke of Him who was "meek and lowly in heart." His industrious and useful career speaks out with a voice of deep and solemn import to all who, in early life, would lay a good foundation for a manhood of usefulness, and an age of quiet and holy enjoyment.

"If thou would'st reap in love,  
First sow in holy fear:  
So life a winter's morn may prove  
To a bright endless year."

Is it not so? Youth is the seed-time of life. Seed then sown "in holy fear," may spring up in after years, and yield a harvest of rich and precious fruits, whose gathering-time shall be "the years of the right hand of the Most High."

2. HIS CALL TO THE MINISTRY.—Perhaps no Church surpasses, in the strictness of its views and the comprehensiveness of its proofs of the spiritual qualities of the ministry, the one at whose altars Mr. Lee offered himself as a sacrifice and a servant. She recognises the right of appointment to the office as residing in the great Head of the Church. Her place of action and responsibility is on a lower platform. "Send by whom Thou wilt send," is the signification of all her measures to ascertain those who are truly called of God "to the office and work of the ministry." She neither gives the call nor provides the qualifications requisite to the work. Her fullest measure of proof, and highest standard of qualification, were met and satisfied when Mr. Lee came forth from the ordeal, and claimed the right to be a "worker together with God" in the "fields already white unto harvest." It was no spiritual knight-errantry that prompted him to a work so full of difficulty and danger; nor could love of ease or fame mingle in the emotions that led him to seek the path of duty amidst scenes of constant sacrifice and exhausting toil. He was "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost," and every external circumstance assumed the character and wore the form of the inward and spiritual conviction. The manifestations of a special designation for the holy office are apparent in the earliest periods of his religious experience; even before he himself was sensible of "what the Spirit of Christ that was in him did signify." He was slow of heart to believe there was any place for him in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. It was after severe self-scrutiny, sincere prayer for heavenly direction, and many fears of taking a wrong step, that he allowed himself to think of the ministry as a probable future engagement. Subsequently, as he yielded to the heavenly calling, and improved in moral stature, his mind turned to it as a possible allotment of life; and this, in turn, was succeeded by a desire, fervent and strong, to testify the gospel of the grace of God as the only effectual mode of satisfying a class of feelings that linked the work of the ministry with the destination of his own soul; and compelled him to

regard it as the only appropriate way in which he could glorify God and do good. And when the darkness was all past, when doubt and fear were superseded by conviction, then was every energy of his nature quickened into vigour and activity, and he was ready always and everywhere to fulfil the ministry he had received, by every mode of manifesting the glory of God in His willingness to save. Thenceforth he was "not his own." Life, with its high aspirations and holy deeds, was devoted to the work whereunto he "was called of God." The toil and self-sacrifice that filled the measure of his days are the testimonials of his fidelity "to Him that appointed him." It is to no one act that the mind turns for the proof of his allegiance to Christ. The eye rests not even upon the nature of his services, or the number and magnitude of his efforts to bring men to experience the saving power of the gospel; but in the simplicity, singleness of heart, and supreme devotedness of every faculty and sense to the one object of his life, it perceives the elements of an integrity and earnestness that commands its reverence and kindles its raptures. His intentions and efforts to fulfil his ministry were transparent as crystal, and pure as gold. No analysis would have detected an impurity. In the condensed outline of his toils and travels given in the preceding pages, we have witnessed his zeal for God, his burning desire to "make full proof of his ministry." But still the narrative, as a record of daily duties, will be found meagre and unsatisfying, except in so far as it serves to suggest the probable multitude of his unrecorded efforts to do good and save souls. In view of what is written, how much of his life must have been a servitude to the welfare of others: How little seems to have been reserved for himself! From what we know of his feelings and habits, we may well say of his ministry—the half has not been told! Into how many families, at how many bed-sides of sickness and sorrow, must he have carried instruction, and offered fervent prayers! To how many must he have spoken words of warning and comfort in the more than eight thousand sermons, and nearly six hundred public exhortations he delivered in the course of his ministry. In labours abundant, and full of charity and zeal, how strongly does his fidelity to his holy calling remonstrate with our indifference, and appeal to our hearts, as his sons in the gospel, to emulate his

success by copying his example,—an example that places him next to Asbury in the greatness of his labours, and second perhaps to none in the success with which they were owned and blessed of God.

3. HIS QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE MINISTERIAL WORK.—These were varied and peculiar; but, for the sake of brevity, we may classify them as natural and spiritual.

Few men have possessed better *natural* endowments than Mr. Lee. Physically and mentally, he seems to have been eminently fitted for the peculiar work to which, in the order of Divine Providence, his entire life was devoted. His constitution was robust and strong. And, notwithstanding his portly size, he was remarkably active, and capable of great endurance. We find him always ready to go where duty called him, regardless of climate or season; and never hear him complaining of toil or fatigue. History seldom presents to our contemplation a more industrious evangelist, a more laborious pastor, or a more diligent Preacher of the word of life. In all these respects, his example is eminently instructive and full of encouragement. Nor can we fail to discover a combination of singular mental qualifications for the extraordinary circumstances in which he was called to fulfil his ministry. An analysis of his mind would present it as clear, strong, and comprehensive; a strong common sense, a quick preception, a great power of combination, and an exquisite sense of the ludicrous. In these elements originated the wit that formed so prominent a feature of his character while living, and is still remembered with so much tenacity, and referred to with so much interest in hours of social ease and freedom of intercourse. And to the same combination of mental qualities must we trace those attributes of zeal and usefulness for which, in every period of his Christian course, he was so eminently distinguished. His steady love of truth; his ready perception and easy exposure of error and false doctrine; his facility of rebuke or sympathy, as circumstances demanded; his life-long habits of industry and perseverance, seem to have been first given, and then brought within circumstances adapted to their spiritual development and maturity, for precisely such a purpose as was served by the ministry of Mr. Lee. Who that follows him in his daily sacrifices, trials, and oppositions of “unreasonable and wicked men,”



in New England, can fail to discover that he was not only eminently, but almost exclusively endowed for the spread of pure religion in that land so fertile of formalism and false doctrine? Who that follows him in his rapid travel from place to place, and witnesses his unflagging zeal and indomitable energy and perseverance, can hesitate to believe that God raised him up, and gave him his rare qualities of mind and powers of endurance, for the especial purpose of carrying the word of the gospel to those who were in the region and shadow of death? And yet we find in his whole evangelical career no hesitation or reluctance; no shrinking back from duty; no disposition to seek a less laborious field of toil. Indeed, he counted not his life dear unto himself, so that he might testify the gospel of the grace of God. It was a positive joy to carry salvation to them that had it not. When such occasions offered, he "rejoiced as one that taketh great spoil."

But we may also trace the developement of these peculiar physical and mental qualities, in the formation of his popular character as an able minister of the New Testament. One of his contemporaries speaks of him "as the best every-day Preacher in the Connection." Among so many very excellent Preachers as graced the period in which Mr. Lee laboured, this is no ordinary praise. But he rarely preached otherwise than well. A commanding presence, combined with a clear, strong, and musical voice, of great reach and compass, and not easily broken, contributed very materially to the efficiency of his ministry. And when to these we add a mind endowed as his was, and cultivated by patient and careful study of the Scriptures, we may see the causes of a popularity that reached to the limits of the Church, and increased even to the close of life. Mr. Lee had no holiday sermons, trimmed and embellished for popular applause, on great public occasions. Preaching was to him a divinely instituted means of saving souls, and he could employ it for no other purpose. It was no plaything to please men's tastes, or gratify their imaginations. The gospel was a message from God, that, received in meekness of faith, brought life into the soul; but, refused and rejected, left guilt and condemnation behind it. The possibility of its proving a "savour of death unto death" to any, made him always earnest and affectionate; literally persuading sinners, even with many tears and

entreaties, to be "reconciled to God." His ardent nature would naturally excite a deep sympathy for those who were ready to perish, and stir up all the energies of his soul, if by any means he might bring them to the knowledge of salvation.

But these were adventitious elements of his ministry. Important as *manner* may be in the estimation of popular taste, and as distinguished as Mr. Lee was for attractiveness and propriety of manner, it is, after all, to the *doctrines* he preached, and God's blessing upon them, that we are to look for the causes of his success, as well as of his general popularity. It is not a sufficient testimonial of his character to say he was orthodox. He was more than sound in doctrine. He was evangelical in his views of the gospel, and in his mode of presenting those views to the people. His texts, and the discourses founded upon them, were always of a peculiarly practical character. If he discoursed of doctrines antagonist to those of his own faith, it was still an evangelical and practical exposition of "the truth which is according to godliness." We have illustrations of this in his controversial sermons.

Sometimes, it is true, with the whole force of his zeal for truth, he would reason out of the Scriptures against the "high mystery of predestination;" and at others, in the vehemence of his feelings against its pernicious effects in hardening the heart, he would affirm that God had sworn to its falsity in declaring He had "no pleasure in the death of a sinner!" But this was out of his ordinary course of proceeding. He knew it was the truth that made the people free—the truth as it is in Jesus—and he preached it with a joyous confidence as a means of salvation. Repentance, faith in Christ, the joy of believing, the willingness of God to save, these were the subjects on which he delighted to dwell in every place and period of his ministry. They were experimental verities to his own soul; and he believed they were full of comfort for all. In a ministry instituted for the recovery of mankind from sin, and their restoration to the favour of God, no doctrines should have greater prominence than these. Based upon the great doctrine of atonement by Jesus Christ, and recognising every man as interested in that work of redemption, they offer to all a free and full salvation. In a word, justification by faith, and its concomitant doctrines, were the themes of a ministry that was everywhere so

fruitful of blessings, and especially in New England. In the days of Edwards this doctrine received a prominence that, despite of "the doctrines of grace," or of "eternal decrees," was effectual in a most gracious and extensive revival of religion. But it had been made to stand by for a more stern and speculative system of teaching, and all was in the valley of the shadow of death. But God had mercy upon the people, and raised up and thrust out a workman whom no opposition could intimidate; whose zeal always "waxed valiant in fight," and whose sole trust was in God and the truth and goodness of his cause. With such resources, and such energy of character, how could he fail of success? He did succeed. His clear expositions of Scripture, his felicity of illustrating important truths, his simple earnestness of manner, and forcible eloquence of words, attracted multitudes wherever he went, and gave an impressiveness to his ministry that it was difficult to resist. His preaching was "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;" and hence the "faith" of those who were given as seals to his ministry, did not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The Societies collected out of the world through his faithful labours, bore the "image and superscription" of Christ; and they were lights, leading, by the truth of their doctrines and the purity of their lives, to the "fountain for sin and uncleanness." These are his witnessings; and, of his "ripeness of knowledge," earnest zeal, and commendable fidelity to all the demands of his holy calling, they give no uncertain sound.

But in forming an estimate of the qualifications of Mr. Lee for the work of the ministry, we must not omit properties of a *spiritual* nature, not yet brought into view with sufficient distinctness. We are not now referring to his regeneration, nor even to his subsequent and life-long acquaintance with God. These are facts full of beauty and strength in support of any claim he might put forth for authority to "do the work of an evangelist." But as *facts* merely, we have here no need to discuss them. We choose rather, and for the sake of enlarging upon a topic that pressed itself upon our thoughts at nearly every stage of the work we are bringing to a close,—we choose, even at the risk of being called fanciful, to consider his personal piety and special call to the ministry, as sub-

ordinate, not only to the effectual working of the Spirit, but to the *effects*, on himself and his preaching, superinduced by the presence and power of these very facts. Personal regeneration and a Divine call are facts in the experience of Mr. Lee. But facts and the effects of facts are different things. We are pleading for the living spirit and *power* of these facts in directing and influencing the efforts put forth in fulfilment of his ministry. Perhaps we may present this matter in a better light by considering its developements in his character, and on his labours.

First. *In producing entire confidence in his own integrity of heart.* His eye was single. His motives, desires, feelings, were all "perfect, and right, and pure and good." He was assured of this as a *fact*. And it was a powerful spring of action. His heart did not condemn him; and he had confidence toward God, and in himself. Having no guile, he had no misgivings; and his soul was not held back from duty by a secret fear, or gnawing distrust. "All things" that purity might desire, and integrity seek after, "were possible" to this faith. Is it possible to estimate the influence such a sense of confidence exerts over one's actions and feelings? Measure it by any standard, and it stretches away beyond the laws of investigation, but compels our submission as one of the elements of the power by which the world is to be subdued to the obedience of Christ. Are there not continual manifestations in the life of Mr. Lee, of the presence of this sense of self-rectitude, and of its power in promoting his efforts to do good? Do we not perceive, wherever he was, in what work soever he was engaged, he had ever a sense of his own unselfish sincerity animating him to duty, and really gracing its performance? Under the force of this principle of self-integrity, difficulties insurmountable to ordinary men fled at his approach, and success and triumph hastened to meet him. Its presence made hope brighter, love purer, and faith stronger; and under this spiritual combination his efforts to do good were more steadfast, his self-sacrificing obedience more cheerfully rendered, and his desire of success more invincible and enterprising. The conquest of souls to Christ was an infallible consequence. It were a violence of our religious sense to anticipate failure. Before this view of the subject, as a manifestation of spiritual qualification for the work of the ministry, is rejected or ridiculed, let the ques-

tion, as to the force of a *sense of guilt* and sinfulness in paralyzing or preventing efforts to do good, be considered and decided, and we shall await the award with entire confidence that it will confirm and strengthen the opinions we have stated above. So far, then, as a consciousness of being rightly employed in the right work can give strength to faith and vigour to effort—and it is a most powerful agent of success—Mr. Lee had an element of usefulness that doubt could not weaken, nor distrust paralyze; and which waxed braver and stronger under the pressure of obstacles and discouragements. How could *he* fail to do good?

Secondly. *In producing confidence in his efforts as specially authorized by God.* We have seen his exercises of mind while striving to settle the question of being “truly called of God.” Even then he had so secured *our* confidence in his integrity of character, as to satisfy us that selfishness would have no place in the decision *he* might reach. We felt *he* was *called* long before he was satisfied as to “the mind of Christ.” But when conviction did come to his soul, it was a life-long realization of God’s authority in him, and power over him. He neither doubted as to what God would have him to do, nor hesitated as to the doing of it. It was this ever-present sense of authority to act and speak in the name of God, and “for the promoting of His glory,” that made his ministry a manifestation of power. He felt himself to be “a messenger of Christ,” commissioned to turn “men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” It was not merely his duty to preach, but his right by preaching to save souls. In his humble but strong view of the office he was called to fill, he believed it authorized him to say and feel, and to act under the force of the conviction that, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon *me*, because He hath anointed *me* to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent *me* to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” “The Spirit of Christ which was in him did signify,” by all its voices and impulses, that he was “chosen and ordained to bring forth fruit” in the regeneration of souls. And nothing short of the conversion of sinners could meet his sense of the “necessity that was laid upon him” to preach, or

satisfy the demands of his conscience for a fruitfulness in the ministry that God had authorized him to "seek and find," to "ask and receive." How else could he "*fulfil* the ministry he had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God?" Or how else meet the demands of Divine expectation that "*counted* him faithful, putting him into the ministry?" The command was, "Go, *work* in my vineyard;" go, thrust in the sickle, for the harvest of the world is ripe; go out into all the earth, and as ye go, preach. Could he hear such words as these, and then come again without bringing sheaves with him? Then life had been a seed-time of tears, and he had never known the joy of harvest. But he went, and came, and his hands were full of the fruits that bless the co-labourer with God.

Thirdly. *In producing supreme confidence in the efficiency of preaching to save sinners.* The gospel was, in a peculiar sense, the power of God. It was a deposite of God's power and grace for salvation to them that hear and believe. The gospel, preached in faith and affection, was *obliged* to save. Salvation was its sole object; and, as Mr. Lee reasoned and believed, it *must* "accomplish that whereunto it was sent." God's word is, *shall*. It *shall* accomplish. This was its voice in the heart of Mr. Lee; and he believed the word that was spoken. His soul reposed upon the Divine efficiency of the gospel, as upon a rock. And when he preached, he felt that "a dispensation of the gospel" was committed to him. He not only believed in it as a system of truth and righteousness, but believed it was in his hands, as God's servant, an instrument of salvation—that through it, *he* could save souls. This conviction animated all his views of his office, and prompted obedience to all its duties. His preaching was a declaration of his purpose to be "clear of the blood of all men." "The Word of God, quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword," he would thrust, by the power of preaching, to the very heart of sin. He sought no other helps to save souls, no persuasives to piety, but such as were authorized by a simple and supreme reliance upon "the preaching of the cross." This was a fortress stronger than "the munition of rocks;" a magazine full of the weapons of his warfare. He would employ no other instrument. If this did not save, sinners must perish, since the gospel prescribed no

other means of saving souls from death. But what a power was hereby placed in his hands! With what zeal for God's glory did he employ it; and to how many redeemed and rejoicing souls was it a saviour of life unto life!

It is in these things we perceive the peculiar qualifications for a ministry always laborious, and ever fruitful in winning souls to Christ. If it demanded extraordinary toils, it yielded extraordinary comforts. If it conveyed the blessings of salvation to them that received it as a message from God, it left riches of grace in the heart of him that "sowed precious seed beside all waters." Others may have felt and acted differently, but their views and feelings were not the standard by which he measured his own trusts and responsibilities. To his own Master he was to stand or fall. He was fully persuaded in his own mind of his right to preach, and of the power of faithful preaching in accomplishing the end for which Christ died. And the history of his life gives its uniform testimony to this fact, that, in his personal joy of salvation, and in fidelity "to Him that appointed him" a messenger of Christ, he held "the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end,"—linking the first-born joy of forgiveness with the victor-shout of his triumph over the last enemy of man.

THE END.













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